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SALAR

DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

ساڈھ روزنامہ بنگلور

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Tejashwi claims he is dropped from Bihar poll roll

PATNA, 2 AUG

Tensions flared over the upcoming Bihar assembly polls as RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav claimed his name was missing from the draft electoral rolls, a charge swiftly denied by the administration and the Election Commission. Yadav, now Leader of Opposition (LoP), demonstrated that his EPIC number returned "no records" when searched online, suggesting he was unregistered. He lamented, "This disqualifies me from contesting elections... Perhaps, I cease to be treated as a citizen." *—PTI*

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2 terrorists killed in encounter in Kulgam

SRINAGAR, 2 AUG

Two terrorists were killed in an encounter with security forces in Jammu and Kashmir's Kulgam district on Saturday, officials said. The overnight encounter began after security forces launched a cordon and search operation in a forest area at Akhal in the south Kashmir district, following specific intelligence inputs about the presence of terrorists there. After an initial exchange of fire between the two sides on Friday evening, the operation was halted for the night, the officials said. In the meantime, the cordon was strengthened, and additional reinforcements were rushed to the area. Firing resumed on Saturday morning, during which two terrorists were killed, the officials said. *—PTI*

PM's calls for 'swadeshi' push amid US' 25% tariffs

India 3rd largest growing nation, PM counters Trump

VARANASI, 2 AUG

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday urged citizens to embrace the spirit of Swadeshi and prioritise locally-made products, calling it a true service to the nation, especially in the face of global economic instability.

Speaking at a public gathering in Banauli village, Sevapuri, Varanasi, Modi highlighted the global economic uncertainty triggered by shifting trade policies. "The world economy is unstable. Countries are pursuing their own interests. India, too, must stay focused on its economic priorities as it moves towards becoming the world's third-largest economy," he said.

The renewed call for Swadeshi comes amid the US imposing 25 per cent tariffs on exports from around 70 countries, including India. Modi stressed the importance of supporting farmers, small industries, and youth employment. "The government is doing its part, but citizens must also take responsibility," he said.

He urged a national movement to promote local products, adding, "This isn't just about Modi saying it — every Indian must say it. All political parties must unite in awakening the spirit of Swadeshi."

The Prime Minister appealed to consumers to choose consciously. "Before buying, ask — has an Indian toiled to make this? If yes, it's Swadeshi. We must adopt the mantra of Vocal for Local."

Addressing traders and shopkeepers, he called for a pledge to sell only Swadeshi goods, especially with the festive and wedding seasons approaching. He also praised citizens who moved wedding events back to India following his earlier appeals. Modi emphasised that promoting indigenous goods would be a true tribute to Mahatma Gandhi and key to building a developed India.

During his visit, the PM inaugurated and laid foundation stones for 52 projects worth Rs 2,200 crore. He also released Rs 20,500 crore under the 20th PM-KISAN Samman Nidhi instalment to over 9.70 crore farmers. A short film on the scheme's impact was also screened. *—PTI*

PM Narendra Modi during the inauguration and foundation stone laying of projects in Varanasi **PHOTO: PTI**

India stopped buying Russia oil: Trump; Delhi denies

NEW YORK/ WASHINGTON, 2 AUG

US President Donald Trump on Friday claimed he had "heard" India was no longer purchasing oil from Russia, calling it a "good step", though he admitted uncertainty. "That's what I heard. I don't know if that's right or not," he told reporters.

India swiftly rejected the claim. Two senior government sources confirmed that oil imports from Russia will continue, citing long-term contracts. "It's not so simple to stop overnight," one said.

The New York Times quoted Indian officials stating that there had been no policy change or directive to oil companies to reduce Russian imports. Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal added that India's sourcing decisions are based on international prices and global conditions.

India, which imports 85 per cent of its crude needs, has defended its strategy as aligned with international norms. Officials pointed out that Russian oil is not under US or EU sanctions, unlike Iranian or Venezuelan crude. Indian Oil Marketing Companies (OMCs) have complied with the US-recommended $60 price cap and are preparing for the EU's proposed $47.6 cap from September.

Trump's remarks came a day after the White House imposed 25 per cent tariffs on exports from 70 countries, including India. While the order did not mention penalties, Trump said India would face additional charges for purchasing Russian energy and military equipment.

Trump also criticised India's high tariffs and close ties with Russia, stating, "They can take their dead economies down together, for all I care," in a Truth Social post. He accused India of non-monetary trade barriers and added, "We've done very little business with India because of their obnoxious tariffs." *—PTI*

COURT SLAPS RS 11L FINE

Ex JD(S) MP Prajwal gets lifer in rape case

Prajwal was found guilty in one of the four rape and sexual abuse cases filed against him **PHOTO: PTI**

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Four years after the occurrence of the crime and a year after it came to light, suspended JD(S) leader and former MP Prajwal Revanna was on Saturday sentenced to prison term for the remainder of his life, while the court slapped an overall fine of Rs 11.50 lakh on him, directing that Rs 11.25 lakh of it be paid to the victim woman, a domestic help to the family of the accused.

Prajwal was found guilty in one of the four rape and sexual abuse cases filed against him. The conviction relates to the rape of a 48-year-old domestic worker employed at the Revanna family's farmhouse in Gannikada, Holenarasipura, Hassan district. The woman was allegedly raped twice in 2021—once at the farmhouse and once at Revanna's Bengaluru residence. The acts were reportedly filmed by the accused on his mobile phone.

The Special Investigation Team (SIT), assigned to probe the cases, filed a 1,632-page charge sheet with 113 witnesses in September 2024. Revanna faced charges under IPC Sections 376(2)(k), 376(2)(n), 354A, 354B, 354C, 506, and 201, as well as Section 66E of the IT Act.

Prajwal, grandson of former Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda, was arrested by the SIT on 31 May 2024 upon his arrival from Germany at Bengaluru Airport. His arrest followed the circulation of pen drives allegedly containing explicit videos involving him, which surfaced in Hassan ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. JD(S) suspended Revanna after the cases emerged. He also failed to retain the Hassan constituency in the 2024 polls. Three additional cases of sexual harassment and rape are under investigation. *—PTI*

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ED makes first arrest in Anil Ambani loan case

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has arrested Partha Sarathi Biswal, managing director of Odisha-based Biswal Tradelink, in connection with a "fake" bank guarantee issuance racket.

This is first arrest made in Rs 3,000-crore loan fraud case against Anil Ambani The company allegedly provided Rs 68 crore assurance for a Reliance Group company, among others.

The ED launched searches at three premises in Bhubaneswar and one in Kolkata on Friday. Biswal was taken into custody under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and was remanded until 6 August. The case traces back to a November 2024 FIR by Delhi Police's Economic Offences Wing (EOW).

Officials allege the company issued fake bank guarantees against an 8 per cent commission, including a Rs 68.2 crore guarantee submitted to the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) on behalf of Reliance NU BESS Limited, a Reliance Power subsidiary. The company, formerly Maharashtra Energy Generation Limited, was found to have multiple undisclosed bank accounts—about seven—and used a fake email domain, s-bi.co.in, mimicking SBI, to send forged documents. *—PTI*

Kerala nuns get bail as court cites lack of proof

DURG/BILASPUR, 2 AUG

Two Kerala nuns, Preethy Mary and Vandana Francis, along with co-accused Sukaman Mandavi, were granted bail by a Bilaspur court in a human trafficking and forced conversion case. The court noted the case was based on "mere suspicion" and lacked credible evidence, with the alleged victims' parents denying any coercion or inducement.

The trio, arrested on July 25 following a Bajrang Dal complaint, were released from Durg Central Jail on Saturday. Celebrations erupted outside, with LDF MPs, Kerala BJP chief Rajeev Chandrasekhar, and Congress leaders present. The court imposed bail conditions, including passport surrender and fortnightly police reporting.

The alleged victims — three adult women — later filed a complaint in Narayanpur against Bajrang Dal activists, alleging assault and coercion. The judge criticised the FIR's weak foundation and the absence of criminal history or need for custody. The accused are barred from media interactions and influencing witnesses. *—PTI*

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WhatsApp suspends 98L accounts in India

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

As part of its efforts to curb abuse and harmful activity on WhatsApp, the platform has banned more than 98 lakh accounts in India during June, according to WhatsApp's latest India Monthly Report. Of the 98 lakh or so accounts, 19.79 lakh accounts were banned before WhatsApp received any complaints, meaning a proactive ban. Additionally, the platform also acted on grievances received.

Of the total 23,596 complaints received from Indian users in through its grievance redressal mechanism, for June, action was taken against just 1,001 accounts. Most complaints were related to ban appeals. *—Agencies*

FROM WHITEFIELD TO RR NAGAR

BMRCL facilitates Bengaluru's 1st-ever organ transport via Metro

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

In a first for Namma Metro, Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) facilitated the transport of a donated human liver via metro train for transplant on Thursday evening.

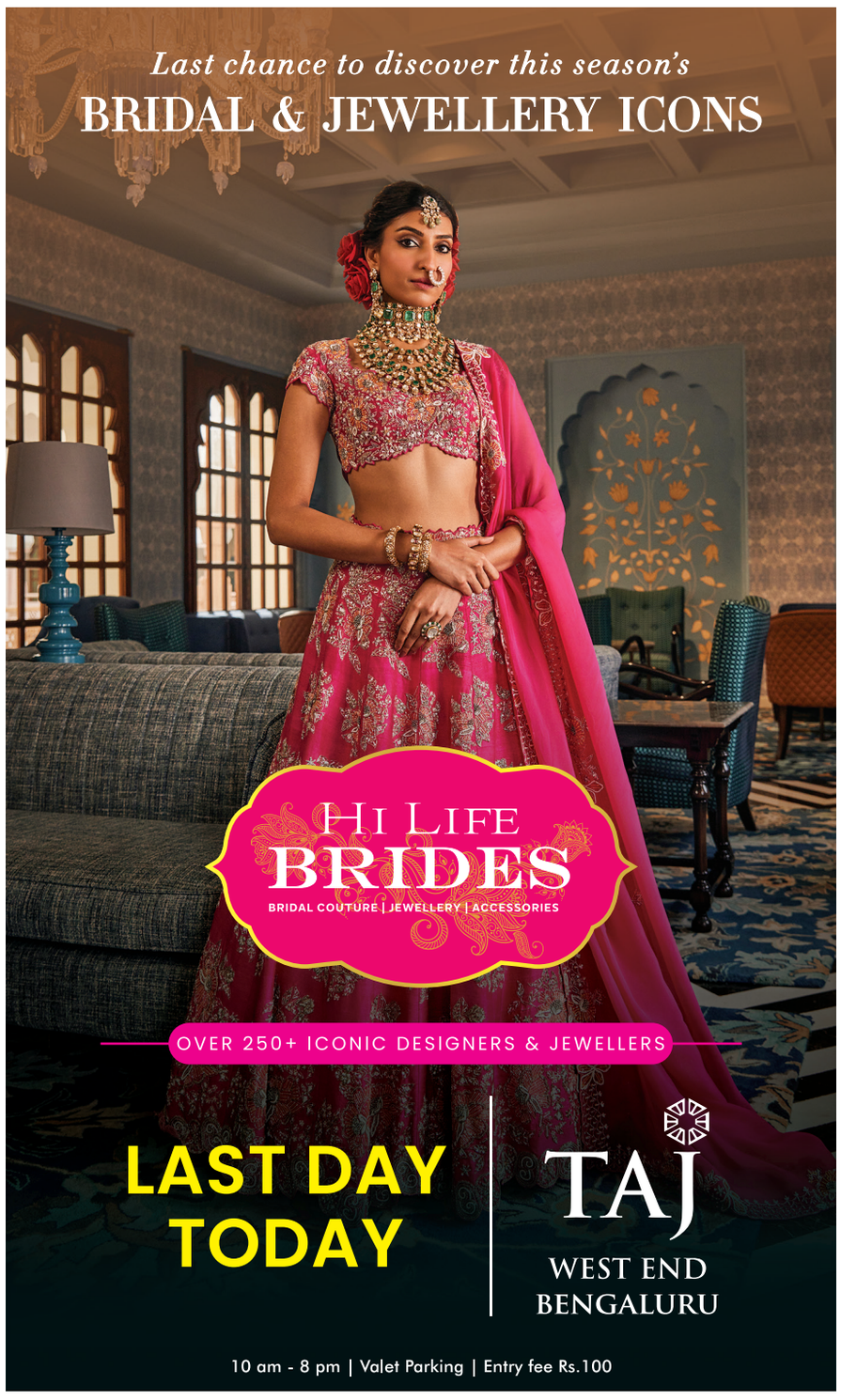
According to a BMRCL release on Saturday, the liver was collected from Vydehi Hospital and transported by ambulance to Whitefield Metro Station at 8.38pm on 1 August. A doctor and seven medical personnel accompanied the organ.

"Upon arrival, the team was received by an Assistant Security Officer (ASO) and Metro personnel, who coordinated the documentation and necessary security checks," BMRCL said.

PHOTO: X@SANTOSHSLADING

The organ was loaded onto a train departing Whitefield at 8.42pm and reached Rajarajeshwarinagar Metro Station at 9.48pm. There, another ASO and staff facilitated its transfer to a waiting ambulance, which rushed it to Sparsh Hospital for a life-saving transplant.

The operation followed guidelines from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and the BMRCL's Joint Procedure Order (JPO)."This marks the first such transport on Namma Metro and only the second instance in India," BMRCL added. The first occurred on 18 January, when Hyderabad Metro created a "green channel" to transport a donor heart across the City. *—PTI*


Last chance to discover this season's
BRIDAL & JEWELLERY ICONS
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BRIDES
BRIDAL COUTURE | JEWELLERY | ACCESSORIES
OVER 250+ ICONIC DESIGNERS & JEWELLERS
LAST DAY TODAY
TAJ
WEST END
BENGALURU
10 am - 8 pm | Valet Parking | Entry fee Rs.100

Govt allocates grants to train SC/ ST musicians

MYSURU, 2 AUG

Minister for Social Welfare HC Mahadevappa said that the government is providing funds to promote music and arts among SC/ST artistes through Tribal Sub Plan and Special Component Plan grants. Speaking after inaugurating a six-month art training programme for SC/ ST artists at Kalamandir, he said, "The State Social Welfare Department has provided grants to promote hidden cultural talents of SC/ST communities." He said that the programme offers a thrice-weekly training in classical, and folk music. Mahadevappa emphasised the government's commitment to arts, social security, and empowerment schemes for women, farmers, and youth. He lauded the Kannada and Culture department for translating Buddha and Dr BR Ambedkar's works into Kannada. *—PTI*

Prajwal breaks down in court, says he is innocent

Claims women were forced to file complaints by prosecution

Prajwal Revanna **PHOTO: PTI**

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Former JD(S) MP Prajwal Revanna broke down in court on Saturday, pleading for leniency before being sentenced to life imprisonment in a rape case. While the prosecution pushed for the maximum sentence, the 34-year-old claimed he had "done nothing wrong" and said his only mistake was his "fast growth in politics".

Prajwal, a BE Mechanical graduate, told the court he had always succeeded on merit. He insisted that the accusations were politically motivated and surfaced just six days before the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. "None of the women came forward voluntarily. They were brought and made to file complaints by the prosecution," he alleged.

He questioned the timing of the complaint by the victim, who, he claimed, had not informed her husband or relatives about the alleged assault until after videos were circulated. "I have a family... I haven't seen my parents in six months," Prajwal said, appealing emotionally for a reduced sentence.

Key evidence included video recordings made by Revanna himself, DNA reports, and clothes worn by the victim during the assault, which were recovered years after the incident. Additional SPP BN Jagadeesha commended the Investigating Officer for retrieving critical evidence after a significant time lapse.

The prosecution maintained that the severity and nature of the crime warranted a life sentence, which the court ultimately granted. Revanna, who was arrested in May 2024 upon returning from Germany, faces three more sexual abuse cases that are currently under investigation.

Meanwhile, Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar questioned the BJP and JD(S) over their silence. "Why are they not commenting? It is their bound duty to comment on this," he said. "If we (Congress) speak on the issue, it will be seen as politics."

He urged BJP leaders CT Ravi, and R Ashoka to comment on the issue. *—PTI*

Actors Darshan and Ramya **PHOTO: PTI**

2 held for abusing Ramya online

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Two individuals were arrested by the Central Crime Branch for posting obscene messages and "issuing rape and death threats" to former Mandya MP and actor Ramya, Bengaluru Police Commissioner Seemant Kumar Singh said on Saturday.

The arrests were made based on a complaint filed by Ramya earlier this week.

Singh said 11 more individuals have been identified for their direct involvement in posting "abusive content online" and will be arrested soon.

Seemant Kumar Singh **PHOTO: PTI**

Ramya, aka Divya Spandana, met the Commissioner on 28 July to file a complaint against 43 social media accounts for sending her obscene messages, along with "rape and death threats".

The online abuse began after she shared a news report on 24 July about the Renukaswamy murder case proceedings in the Supreme Court, in which she demanded justice for the victim's family. Kannada actor Darshan is a prime accused in the case.

Following a verification process, the CCB, along with the social media monitoring team, identified 13 accounts that were actively involved in the abuse, Singh said.

The two arrested individuals hail from neighbouring districts, he added.

When asked whether the accused were fans of Darshan, the Commissioner said that aspect was still under investigation.

Ramya took to X to thank Home Minister G Parameshwara, the Bengaluru Police Commissioner, and the entire CCB team for their swift action.

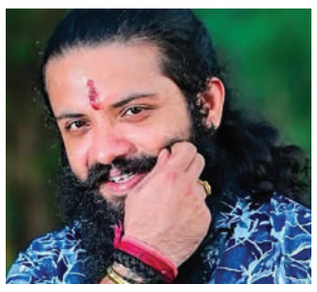
"The City police have taken a firm stand against misogynistic aggression," she posted."It is difficult to escape the hand of the law when it comes to protecting women's dignity and ensuring their safety in our City." *—PTI*

IN SOLIDARITY

Nuns, sisters, and other members of the Christian community gathered at Freedom Park in the City to protest the arrest of Vandana Francis and Preethi Mary in Chhattisgarh. The two were arrested on charges of human trafficking. Archbishop Peter Machado also took part in the demonstration **PHOTO: MOHAMMAD ASAD**

SUHAS SHETTY CASE: NIA SEARCHES 18 LOCATIONS IN STATE

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG



Suhas Shetty **PHOTO: PTI**

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday conducted extensive searches at 18 locations in various districts in connection with Bajrang Dal member Suhas Shetty's targeted killing case.

Shetty was publicly assaulted and brutally murdered by the accused -- Abdul Safwan -- and others using lethal weapons in Bajpe area of Mangaluru City in May this year, said a statement issued by the NIA.

The killing was intended to spread terror in the society, it said.

The NIA, which took over the case from the local police in June, searched the residences of the 12 arrested individuals and various suspects in the case.

The searches, carried out in the districts of Mangaluru, Chikkamagaluru and Hassan, led to the seizure of various digital devices, including 11 mobile phones, 13 SIM cards and eight memory cards along with other incriminating documents, the probe agency said.

The investigation into the conspiracy behind the killing is continuing, it added.

Shetty was travelling in a vehicle with his associates on 1 May when five to six assailants, who came in a car and a pick-up vehicle, intercepted him. The assailants attacked Shetty with sharp weapons, causing grievous injuries. He was rushed to a hospital, where he succumbed to his injuries. *—PTI*

BJP to protest against Congress in the City on 5 Aug: Vijayendra

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

BY Vijayendra **PHOTO: PTI**

- Asked State BJP Chief BY Vijayendra said that the saffron party would protest in the Vidhana Soudha the same day that Rahul will be leading his 'vote theft' movement in the City

State BJP President BY Vijayendra announced on Saturday that the party will protest against the Congress's "anti-constitutional attitude" in the City on 5 August, the same day Rahul Gandhi leads a protest over alleged "votes theft". The BJP plans to demonstrate near the Gandhi Statue in Vidhana Soudha, after their request to hold the protest at the same venue was denied, citing law and order concerns and the Congress's ongoing protest at Freedom Park.

Gandhi's protest at Freedom Park is against alleged election "votes theft", which he claims is being orchestrated across India, including in State. Vijayendra criticised the Congress, stating, "They have lost faith in democracy and Constitutional bodies," and questioned how the party secured power in State and won three by-elections.

He accused Gandhi of being unable to accept Narendra Modi's leadership, saying Gandhi was "misguiding the people and insulting voters". Vijayendra challenged Gandhi's claim of possessing "an atom bomb" of evidence against the Election Commission, urging him to present proof to the ECI or challenge it in the Supreme Court.

Vijayendra also asked Gandhi to apologise for the 4 June stampede outside Chinnaswamy Stadium, which resulted in 11 deaths, blaming the incident on the "irresponsibility" of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy CM DK Shivakumar. He concluded by affirming that BJP MPs, MLAs, and MLCs will protest the Congress's "anti-constitutional attitude" near the Gandhi Statue in Vidhana Soudha. *—PTI*

DHARMASTHALA MASS BURIAL: EXHUMATION CONTINUES AT NINTH SITE

DHARMASTHALA, 2 AUG

The Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged mass burial case in Dharmasthala resumed exhumation on Saturday at the ninth site identified by the complainant, police said.

Officials reached the location adjacent to the Nethravathi riverbank along the Ujire-Dharmasthala-Kokkada state highway around 11.30am, marking the fifth consecutive day of exhumation activity.

The SIT planned to exhume four adjacent sites in the presence of the complainant. These sites are among the 15 locations pinpointed by the anonymous complainant-witness, who claimed that he had buried multiple human bodies along the riverbank over decades. Dakshina Kannada district police maintained a protective cordon around the sites. A green fabric barricade was erected to prevent unauthorised visual access. Traffic on the highway, however, continues to operate normally.

The SIT team, assisted by labourers, machinery operators, and mechanical grass-cutting tools, have begun the work at site No 9.

On 31 July, skeletal remains recovered a site were sent for forensic examination.

The SIT was formed after a former sanitation worker claimed to have buried hundreds of bodies. *—PTI*

Special Investigation Team (SIT) during examination at a site in the Dharmasthala mass burial case **PHOTO: PTI**

Muthappa Rai's associate held in Noida

KOLAR, 2 AUG

Kaviraj, a noted criminal associate of underworld dons Muthappa Rai and Ravi Poojari, has been arrested by Kolar Cyber Crimes, Economic and Narcotics (CEN) police in Noida. Kaviraj was wanted in 14 different cases including murder, assault, extortion, and kidnapping.

Notably, Kaviraj was also in the 2020 abduction case of former minister Varthur R Prakash from Kolar. A native of Nepal border region, Kaviraj has been evading arrest and had been on the run for the past two and half years.

Kolar Superintendent of Police, while reviewing the old cases, found that Varthur Prakash's abduction case had not made much headway. He directed the CEN Inspector Jagadish to take up the case as a challenge.

Kaviraj **PHOTO: SALAR**

Jagadish found that Kaviraj had been changing the mobile phones often and often and has been moving frequently.

With a police team including Constables Ambarish, Murali and Santosh, Jagadish began using technical evidence and advanced technology to trace him. They searched for over a month in various places, including New Delhi, Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand, but could not trace him.

However, they then found he was using an internet dongle. He had used the dongle some six years back, and then recently used it to search his memories to find some photos and other materials.

This allowed the police team to trace Kaviraj and then apprehend him in Noida on the 31 July. After an interrogation, he was produced before a Magistrate and has been sent to Judicial custody. *—Salar News*

New 'Arjuna Elephant' award for forest staff

BIDAR, 2 AUG

An annual award has been instituted in the name of Arjuna, the iconic Dasara elephant who died during a wild elephant capture operation near Yasalur in Hassan district. Forest, Zoology and Environment Minister Eshwar B. Khandre announced that the first "Arjuna Elephant" award will be presented on August 4 during the Gajapayana ceremony at Naddiddu. The award will honour mahouts and forest staff who play significant roles in human-wildlife conflict resolution. *—Salar News*

3 including, Ram Sena activist, held for poisoning school water

BELAGAVI, 2 AUG

Three people, including the President of the Savadatti taluk Shri Ram Sena, have been arrested for mixing pesticide into a government primary school's water supply in Hulikatti, Belagavi.

Police said that the accused had mixed the poison some 15 days ago, after which 11 students fell ill and were hospitalised.

They poisoned the water because the headmaster of the school was from the Muslim community, and they wanted him to be transferred, Belagavi Superintendent of Police Bhimashankar Guled said Saturday.

The accused, Sagar Patil – the Sena President - Krishna Madar and Magangouda Patil were also considering threatened to expose the headmaster's his relationship with a woman from another community if the plan had not worked out.

As one of his relative was a student of the school, Patil managed to get access to the tank, police said.

All the accused have been remanded to judicial custody, Guled added. *—Salar News*

'Investors worried about land use conflicts'

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

Investors in the State have voiced concerns over increasing land use conflicts for industrial development, according to DPIIT Secretary Amardeep Singh Bhatia. Speaking at the 'Viksit Bharat-2047' Investors' Roundtable, Amardeep said the State government was actively working to address these issues and would take necessary steps to improve conditions. Bhatia highlighted the need for better infrastructure and streamlined approval processes, including improvements to the single-window clearance system.

He cited the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP), which features 20 sector-specific industrial parks, as a model for southern states. State's Principal Secretary of Commerce & Industries, S Selvakumar, announced the expansion of the single-window system to cover 105 of 153 services and said State would replicate its Electronic City Township Model to boost regional growth. *—PTI*

LAST OF HER GENERATION

Rajkumar's sister Nagamma dies at 91

CHAMARAJNAGAR, 2 AUG

Dr. Rajkumar's younger sister Nagamma, 94, died due to age-related ailments at her residence in Doddagajanur of Talavadi taluk, Tamil Nadu, bordering Chamarajanagar district, on Friday.

Nagamma, who was staying at her farmhouse, leaves behind 4 sons and 2 daughters. She was the family last member of Dr. Rajkumar's generation.

Nagamma **PHOTO: X**

The last rites were reportedly performed on land near her farmhouse on Saturday. Dr. Rajkumar's family members were reportedly among those who attended her funeral.

Actor Shiva Rajkumar and late Puneeth Rajkumar, sons of late superstar Dr Rajkumar, used to visit Nagamma when they went to Chamarajanagar. She was very fond of Puneeth and was not told about his death.

"Kanda I want to meet you," she said in a video, wishing Puneeth on what would have been his 50th birthday. "I want to see you."

Family members had reportedly told Nagamma that Puneeth is busy with shooting, as she had not been reading watch news channels or reading newspapers due to her age.

Puneeth died aged 46 due to a cardiac arrest while at a gym in City in October, 2021. He had reportedly grown closer to Nagamma after his mother died in 2017. *—Agencies*

National Livelihood Mission launches 'Drug-Free Karnataka' campaign

BENGALURU, 2 AUG

In a renewed effort to combat rising drug abuse, the National Livelihood Mission (NLM) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana has launched a two-month-long "Drug-Free Karnataka Campaign" across the State from 1 August to 30 September.

PI Sreevidya, Director of NLM under the Department of Skill Development, said the campaign is being implemented in collaboration with government departments. The campaign aims to educate people about the dangers of drug use, its impact on health, and the social consequences of addiction. Activities will take place at gram panchayat, taluk, and district levels, trying to involve women's self-help groups and community organisations. *—Salar News*

Kerala nuns get bail in 'trafficking case'

Kerala LDF claims political agenda behind the duo's arrest, UDF says false case

BILASPUR/T'PURAM
2 AUG

A special court in Chhattisgarh's Bilaspur district on Saturday granted bail to two nuns from Kerala and one other person arrested on charges of human trafficking and forced religious conversion.

The ruling came with the condition that they surrender their passports and not leave the country.

The court on Saturday granted them bail on the condition that they submit a bond of Rs 50,000 each with two sureties, not leave the country, and surrender their passports, he said.

They will also have to cooperate in the investigation, Das said, adding that there were a few more conditions, but that the final order was yet to be received.

The two nuns from Kerala being welcomed after their release from Durg Central Jail, on bail, in Chhattisgarh's Durg on Saturday **PHOTO: PTI**

The arrest of the nuns resulted in a political slugfest with the Congress and CPI(M) criticising the police action and Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai accusing the parties of politicising the issue.

Following the bail hearing on Friday, Das had said that the prosecution had not asked for the trio's custody for interrogation, and the alleged victims had been sent back to their homes.

Talking to reporters, public prosecutor Dauram Chandravanshi also confirmed that bail has been granted to the nuns and one other person, with certain conditions.

Responding to the relief offered to the nuns, the ruling LDF, the Opposition UDF and a prominent catholic body in Kerala on Saturday welcomed the grant of bail.

State General Education Minister V Sivankutty, in a Facebook post, termed the development "heartening", but said that the political agenda behind the nuns' arrest was very clear.

The grant of bail to the nuns, nine days after their arrest on 25 July, was welcomed by the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, V D Satheesan, who said that they were jailed in a false case for crimes they did not commit.

"They were unable to control the Bajrang Dal or the Chhattisgarh government. It shows that they were also working together," he alleged.

Archbishop of Trichur Andrews Thazhath, president of the Catholic Bishops Conference of India (CBCI), said he was happy that the nuns got bail. *—PTI*

- The arrest of the nuns resulted in a political slugfest not just in Kerala but across India. While the Congress and CPI(M) criticised the police actio under 'false pretenses,' Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai accused the parties of politicising the issue.

Man 'insults' Ram temple on Insta, FIR filed

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, 2 AUG

A man from Shirur Kasar in Maharashtra's Beed district has filed a police complaint after receiving a threat on Instagram related to the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. Suraj Gadekar, 24, said he was watching a reel on 11 July when he saw an objectionable comment from a user claiming to be from Karachi, Pakistan. After an angry exchange, the user allegedly insulted the Hindu religion and sent an audio clip threatening an attack on the temple. Maharashtra police have registered a case under Sections 299 and 302 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for deliberate acts intended to outrage religious sentiments and an iinvestigation is ongoing. *—PTI*

Money laundering case: Robert Vadra issued notice

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

A Delhi court has issued notices to Robert Vadra and ten others in a money laundering case linked to a 2008 Gurugram land deal involving Sky Light Hospitality. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) alleges Vadra's firm falsely declared a Rs 7.5 crore payment for 3.53 acres in Shikohpur to evade stamp duty. The land was later sold to DLF for a profit. The ED claims this constitutes a "clear and classic" case of money laundering, with proceeds used to acquire 43 properties now provisionally attached. Vadra, holding 99 per cent shares in Sky Light, is accused of being the beneficial and actual owner. The court has scheduled the matter for hearing on 28 August at the pre-cognisance stage. *—ANI*

Raids at Punjab realtor's home after joining BJP

CHANDIGARH, 2 AUG

The Punjab Vigilance Bureau on Saturday raided the residence of Ranjit Singh Gill, owner of the Gillco Group, in Chandigarh just hours after he joined the BJP. BJP legal advisor LK Verma criticised the move, calling it politically motivated. "AAP has used similar tactics against senior leaders like Tajinder Bagga to exert pressure," he said, vowing legal action. Meanwhile, in a separate case on 23 July, ASI Jagtar Singh was caught red-handed accepting a USD 120 bribe in Sangrur. He had allegedly demanded USD 150 to proceed with a bail case and another USD 200 to return confiscated property. A case under the Prevention of Corruption Act has been registered. *—ANI*

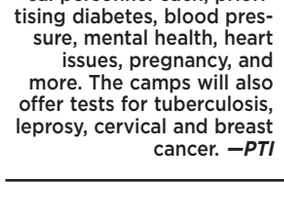


PHOTO: ANI

TN CM launches 'Nalam Kakkum Stalin' health camp

CHENNAI, 2 AUG

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister MK Stalin launched the 'Nalam Kakkum Stalin' health screening programme across the state, emphasising that doctors should see patients as beneficiaries of health initiatives. He stated, "Those who come to the hospital should be seen as beneficiaries of health initiatives and not as patients." Stalin, recalling his recent hospitalisation for giddiness, shared, "Meeting people gives me energy, and I get cured," adding he continued to discharge duties from hospital. The programme will conduct about 1,256 camps, covering rural and tribal areas, with 200 medical personnel each, prioritising diabetes, blood pressure, mental health, heart issues, pregnancy, and more. The camps will also offer tests for tuberculosis, leprosy, cervical and breast cancer. *—PTI*

My name missing in draft rolls: Tejashwi

PATNA, 2 AUG

Tensions flared over the upcoming Bihar assembly polls as RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav claimed his name was missing from the draft electoral rolls, a charge swiftly denied by the administration and the Election Commission.

Yadav, now Leader of Opposition (LoP), demonstrated that his EPIC number returned "no records" when searched online, suggesting he was unregistered. He lamented, "This disqualifies me from contesting elections... Perhaps, I cease to be treated as a citizen."

The district administration and the EC shared screenshots showing his name present at the same polling station, with minor serial number changes.

Tejashwi Yadav **PHOTO: PTI**

It pointed out that no booth level agent (BLA) of any political party including RJD has submitted a single case to the booth level officers for inclusion or deletion during the past 24 hours.

In broader political discourse, Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge accused the EC of becoming "Modi's puppet," alleging the commission aimed to disenfranchise 65 lakh voters in Bihar, particularly marginalised groups. Kharge claimed the EC's actions threatened democracy, saying, "The Constitution is in danger," and accused Prime Minister Modi of polarising society and avoiding parliamentary accountability.

Kharge further criticised the government's interference, citing alleged manipulation of voter data and questioning the integrity of recent election figures. He warned that "discrimination against minorities and Dalits" persisted under BJP rule, asserting, "We will protect the Constitution at all costs." *—PTI*

Will contest solo if NDA talks fail: SBSP chief

BALLIA, 2 AUG

Om Prakash Rajbhar, leader of the Suheldev Bharatiya Samaj Party (SBSP), announced on Friday that his party is prepared to contest the upcoming Bihar elections independently if seat-sharing talks with the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) fail.

Speaking at his party headquarters in Rasra, Ballia district, Uttar Pradesh, Rajbhar stated, "Our first preference is to contest in alliance with the NDA. About 70 per cent of discussions are finalised, with 30 per cent pending."

He added, "If, due to pressure from Bihar leaders, an agreement isn't reached, we are fully ready to contest separately."

Rajbhar clarified that his party would not join the INDIA bloc, and is exploring options with other outside parties, with active preparations for 156 seats.

Criticising Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, Rajbhar accused him of questioning India's credibility and attacking the Election Commission when abroad, but ignoring such concerns when his party wins elections.

He claimed Gandhi "senses defeat" in Bihar, alleging he is making "baseless statements" similar to former Prime Minister VP Singh, to sow doubt over election legitimacy. *—PTI*

JAITLEY'S SON HITS BACK

Jaitley threatened me over farm laws: RaGa

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi alleged on Saturday that former finance minister Arun Jaitley had threatened him and asked him not to oppose the farm laws, a claim dismissed by the BJP as "fake news".

Gandhi made the remark at the Congress' annual legal conclave.

Responding to the Congress MP's comment on the late politician, his son Rohan Jaitley took to X to emphasise. My father passed away in 2019. The farm laws were introduced in 2020."

He added, "If such a situation occurred, he would have invited open discussion—his legacy was building consensus."

BJP IT cell head Amit Malviya countered Gandhi's claim, posting on X, "Fake News Alert," and clarified, "Arun Jaitley passed away in August 2019, before the farm laws were drafted or enacted." He urged Gandhi to "stick to facts."

Rahul Gandhi **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

In a separate attack on the election system, Gandhi claimed the 2024 Lok Sabha election was "rigged" and the system was "already dead".

Addressing a legal conclave, he cited data from Karnataka suggesting 1.5 lakh votes were "fake" out of 6.5 lakh. "The election system in India is already dead," he said, asserting, "If 10-15 seats were rigged, he wouldn't be the prime minister." Gandhi also accused the Election Commission of being "obliterated", claiming to now possess "100 per cent proof" of election rigging. He concluded, "Right from 2014, I suspected something was wrong." *—PTI*

CM must teach Marathi to migrants: Raj

PANVEL, 2 AUG

Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray criticised Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis at a Peasants and Workers Party event, accusing him of neglecting Marathi speakers and prioritising Hindi in schools. Thackeray questioned why the government focuses on teaching Hindi to schoolchildren but does not facilitate Marathi learning for outsiders working in the state.

He also challenged the government to arrest protesters opposing projects under the Maharashtra Public Security Bill, claiming there is no regard for "bhoomiputra" (sons of the soil). Thackeray highlighted land being taken from farmers in Raigad district, warning industries cannot be built on Marathi land without respecting local people.

Addressing Sanjay Raut of Shiv Sena (UBT), Thackeray reiterated that talking about one's state is not parochial. He criticised rapid urbanisation in Raigad and called for the Navi Mumbai Airport to hire entirely Marathi youth. *—PTI*

Raj Thackeray **PHOTO: ANI**

- Raj Thackeray also challenged the Maharashtra government to arrest protesters opposing the state's Public Security Bill, claiming there is no regard for 'brahmaputra'

Ex-CJI Chandrachud vacates govt bungalow

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Former Chief Justice of India DY Chandrachud has vacated the official CJI residence at 5, Krishna Menon Marg, New Delhi, following a row over his extended stay beyond the permissible limit. Justice Chandrachud retired on 8 November, 2024 but remained in the bungalow past the six-month grace period allowed under Rule 3B of the Supreme Court Judges (Amendment) Rules, 2022.

On 1 July, 2025, the Supreme Court administration wrote to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA), stating that the property must be returned to the court's housing pool as the retention period had lapsed. Permission for the stay had expired on 31 May, and the legal grace period ended on 10 May.

In response, Chandrachud explained that he was awaiting a wheelchair-accessible home for his two disabled daughters. He confirmed on 7 July that the family's belongings had been packed and partially moved to a government-rented house. *— PTI*

DY Chandrachud **PHOTO: ANI**

BJP sets up CAA desks to counter Didi

KOLKATA, 2 AUG

The BJP has begun setting up "CAA Sahajogita Shibirs" in parts of West Bengal, aiming to reclaim the Matua vote and counter Mamata Banerjee's "Bengali Asmita" narrative ahead of the upcoming 2026 Assembly polls.

Starting in Bagda, these help desks are now expanding to Bongaon South and other areas with large Matua populations.

They promote a "apply first, verify later" approach, allowing persecuted refugees fleeing religious persecution from neighbouring countries to apply for Indian citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, despite lacking documentation.

BJP leaders, including West Bengal BJP President Samik Bhattacharya, say, "BJP workers will stand by the refugee society everywhere."

The campaign is also a political move to counter Mamata Banerjee's identity politics, especially after incidents like the detention of a Matua family in Pune.

Union Minister Santanu Thakur's Mahasangha is actively helping applicants fill forms and secure affidavits, with the goal of reaching 1.5 crore people across West Bengal.

TMC counterattacks accuse the BJP of exploiting Bengali Hindus, branding the move as a political gimmick. Experts warn that if applications fail, it could undermine the BJP's efforts ahead of the 2026 polls. *—PTI*

J'khand Minister airlifted to Delhi, with brain injury

RANCHI, 2 AUG

Jharkhand Education Minister Ramdas Soren, 62, remains critically ill on life support at Indraprastha Apollo Hospital in Delhi, following a fall at his Jamshedpur home. Soren was airlifted to the hospital after suffering a brain injury caused by a bathroom fall, with blood clotting detected earlier at a local hospital.

A multidisciplinary team of senior specialists is closely monitoring his condition, providing intensive care. State Health Minister Irfan Ansari, who has flown to Delhi, confirmed the severity of Soren's condition.

The JMM leader's fall has raised concern across the state. In a statement, the party described Soren as a brave soldier and an inspiration.

Soren was admitted to hospital earlier in Jamshedpur, where doctors identified the blood clot. The incident underscores the importance of safety at home, especially for senior citizens.

The government and party leaders continue to pray for his swift recovery amid hopes that he will regain stability soon. *—PTI*

Ramdas Soren **PHOTO: PTI**

AIR INDIA CRASH

UK families await update on DNA-matched remains

LONDON, 2 AUG

British families, waiting for the remains of relatives aboard the London-bound Air India 171 plane that crashed soon after takeoff from Ahmedabad airport, are expecting confirmation on DNA matches after high-level India-UK government talks, their legal team has said.

Keystone Law, which has been working with aviation experts to assist many of the families who lost loved ones in the 12 June crash, called for urgency in the process this week.

Of the 241 passengers and crew who died in the disaster, 52 were British nationals. Two out of the 12 caskets repatriated to the UK for last rites were found to be incorrectly identified.

The MEA had responded to the UK reports to stress that "all mortal remains were handled with utmost professionalism. We are continuing to work with the UK authorities on addressing any concerns related to this issue".

Of the 241 passengers and crew who died in the disaster, 52 were British nationals **PHOTO: PTI**

Estimating the scale of the issue, Keystone Law said of a sample of 12 caskets repatriated from India, two were "mislabelled, mishandled and misidentified".

"Extrapolated out – with an unacceptable error rate of 15 per cent, that would suggest 40 sets of remains may have been mislabelled, mishandled and misidentified. That is a known unknown, and many of the families' loved ones have been cremated already". *—PTI*

India receives last of Airbus planes from Spain

PRAKASAM, 2 AUG

India on Saturday received the last of its 16 Airbus C-295 military transport aircraft from Spain, marking an important milestone in strengthening its defence capabilities, the Indian Embassy in Spain said.

The C-295, a transport aircraft of 5-10 tonne capacity with contemporary technology, is set to replace the ageing Avro aircraft of the IAF.

Indian Ambassador to Spain Dinesh K Patnaik, along with senior Indian Air Force officials, received the last of the 16 Airbus C-295 military transport aircraft at the Airbus Defence and Space assembly line in Seville, the Indian mission posted on social media.

"The delivery, two months ahead of schedule, marks an important milestone in strengthening India's defence capabilities," it added.

The aircraft, with a flight endurance of up to 11 hours, is a versatile and efficient tactical transport aircraft.

- Indian Ambassador to Spain Dinesh K Patnaik, along with senior IAF officials, received the last of the 16 Airbus C-295 military transport aircraft.

India signed a contract with Airbus Defence & Space, Spain, for the acquisition of 56 C-295MW transport aircraft for IAF in September 2021.

Under the C-295 programme, a total of 56 aircraft are to be delivered, of which 16 were to be delivered directly by Airbus from Spain, and the remaining 40 will be manufactured in India.

Spain fulfilled that commitment on Saturday by handing over the last of the 16 aircrafts. PM Modi and his Spanish counterpart, Pedro Sanchez, had jointly inaugurated the TATA Aircraft Complex for manufacturing C-295 aircraft at TATA Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) Campus in Gujarat, last year. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Educationist, former VC Vasanthi Devi dies

CHENNAI, 2 AUGUST

Eminent educationist and former Vice-Chancellor of Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Professor V Vasanthi Devi, passed away at 87 following a cardiac arrest on 1 August. She felt unwell at her home in Vilachery, Madurai, and died en route to hospital. She is survived by a son and daughter. Professor Devi served as Chairperson of the Tamil Nadu State Commission for Women and was a member of the State Planning Commission. A passionate human rights advocate, she contested unsuccessfully against J Jayalalithaa in the 2016 RK Nagar Assembly election. Chief Minister MK Stalin and DMK MP Kanimozhi expressed deep condolences, highlighting her significant contributions to education and social justice in Tamil Nadu. *—PTI*

Meghalaya to probe coal misappropriation

SHILLONG, 2 AUGUST

The Meghalaya government has launched an investigation into the alleged misappropriation of over 4,000 metric tonnes of coal, Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong said on Saturday. Acting on a High Court-appointed committee's report, which revealed that coal declared as extracted and inventoried had vanished from two official storage sites, the government has instructed district authorities and police to conduct a thorough inquiry. The probe will include field verification, documentation checks, and tracking of coal and diesel movement. Tynsong stated that strict action would follow if wrongdoing is confirmed, including a possible approach to the Supreme Court. A detailed report will be submitted to the Meghalaya High Court. *—PTI*

Touting at tourist spots in Goa to attract Rs 1 L fine

PANAJI, 2 AUGUST

The Goa Assembly has passed the Goa Tourist Places (Protection and Maintenance) Amendment Bill, 2025, introducing stricter rules to curb public nuisance and unauthorised activities at tourist sites. The amended law broadens the definition of "nuisance" to include touting, littering, drinking in restricted areas, illegal hawking, unauthorised boating, coercive sales, and obstruction of tourist movement. Offenders face fines ranging from Rs 5,000 to Rs 1 lakh and may also be penalised under Section 223 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita for disobeying public officials. A new clause mandates a biennial review of fines, with a possible 10 per cent revision. *—PTI*

IIT Bombay student jumps to death from building

MUMBAI, 2 AUGUST

A 22-year-old student at the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Bombay allegedly died by suicide in the early hours of Saturday. Rohit Sinha, a fourth-year Metallurgical Sciences student from Delhi, is believed to have jumped from the 10th floor of a hostel building in Powai at around 2.30am, police said. He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. An Accidental Death Report (ADR) has been registered, and an investigation is under way to determine the circumstances leading to the incident. IIT Bombay is yet to release an official statement. The case has raised fresh concerns over student mental health on premier campuses across India.

Help is available. Please call Tele Manas at 14416, SAHAI at 080-25497777 for support a. *—PTI*

Kerala fumes at N'atl award for 'The Kerala Story'

Pinarayi says this endorses use of films to spread hate

T'PURAM, 2 AUG

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Saturday said that awarding national film honours to 'The Kerala Story' can only be seen as an endorsement of attempts to misuse movies to spread communal hatred and urged the cultural and film community to oppose such moves unitedly.

Vijayan said it was "extremely unfortunate" that a film, which insults Kerala's secular traditions and defames it before the world was honoured at the national film awards.

"This also insults the great cultural heritage of Indian cinema .....to destroy the secularism of our country and replace it with communalism," he said, prior to inaugurating the Kerala Film Policy Conclave here.

The CM had earlier criticised the decision to award national film honours to "The Kerala Story".

Several Keral ministers have strongly opposed the film saying that the BJP government is using the National Film Awards to further its hate agenda in the country **PHOTO: IMDB**

Filmmaker Sudipto Sen won the Best Director award for his film 'The Kerala Story', which also received the award for Best Cinematography.

The film had courted controversy for its portrayal of women in Kerala being forcefully converted and recruited by the terror group Islamic State.

Vijayan also said that it needs to be examined why the Kerala film industry has not received the level of recognition it deserved

He further said that the conclave was organised with the aim of formulating a comprehensive film policy for the all-round growth and development of Malayalam cinema.

Kerala Cultural Affairs Minister Saji Cherian on Saturday the recognition accorded to 'The Kerala Story' was part of the "Sangh Parivar's political agenda."

Kerala Finance Minister K N Balagopal also criticised the jury's decision, calling 'The Kerala Story' a "false campaign" against the state.

Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan said that the BJP government is using the National Film Awards "to further its hate agenda." *—PTI*

MALEGAON BLAST CASE

Forced to name Modi: Pragya

MUMBAI, 2 AUG

Sadhvi Pragya Thakur **PHOTO: PTI**

Former BJP MP Sadhvi Pragya Thakur on Saturday said that she has given in writing the names of people she had been forced to take during the 2008 Malegaon blast investigations by the Maharashtra Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS), which included Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat among others.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) had acquitted Thakur along with six others in the 2008 Malegaon blast.

Thakur was told that she could escape torture if she took these names. However, she refraining from naming any of them.

She was asked to name Modi since she had been living in Gujarat at the time of the blasts.

Thakur said that the court's verdict was the victory of 'Bhagawa, Sanatana aur Rashtra'.

She also accused the Congress of fabricating the case.

The NIA special court debunked the prosecution's claims that Right-wing extremist group Abhinav Bharat had carried out the blast, noting that the government has not banned the organisation as a terror outfit.

Witness, Milind Joshirao alleged that officials tortured and forced him to name Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in the case. *—PTI*

Respect rights of specially-abled: SC

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Justice Manmohan emphasised the need for increased awareness and sensitivity regarding the rights of persons with disabilities.

Speaking at a conference titled 'Judging and Lawyering at the Margins: Disability Rights and Beyond', organised by Justice Sunanda Bhandare Foundation and Qable, he stated, "The more awareness there is about the Act and rights, the more society and courts will understand, ensuring better compliance."

He highlighted the importance of other state organs rising to the occasion, noting, "The court's docket is full, so it's not feasible for courts to monitor implementation daily. The legislature must put mechanisms in place to enforce court orders." Justice Manmohan stressed that disability rights should be seen as a approach, not charity. *—PTI*

Stakeholders must oppose carbon emission

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The Supreme Court has instructed the Ministry of Power to hold a joint meeting with the Central Electricity Authority and the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission to develop a coordinated plan for reducing carbon emissions from power generation. Justices PS Narasimha and A S Chandurkar stressed the importance of all stakeholders working together, saying, "All stakeholders must be on the same platform to achieve goals." The court will review the plan on 19 August. *—PTI*

18 arrested, 500 booked after violence in Pune over post

PUNE, 2 AUG

Police have filed four cases against more than 500 individuals and arrested 18 in connection with violence in Yavat village, Daund tehsil, Pune district, over an objectionable social media post. The youth responsible for the post has also been arrested, with a separate FIR registered against him.

Communal tensions erupted on Friday afternoon, leading to vandalism and arson, including attacks on a motorcycle, two cars, a religious structure, and a bakery. Police had to use tear gas and lathi charges to disperse the mob. A preventive order remains in place, and the situation is under control.

Yavat police officials confirmed, "So far, five cases have been registered related to the violence. The identity of over 100 of the 500+ involved has been established, and 17 arrests made."

Police keep vigil in Yavat village in Maharashtra's Pune after the violence that broke out over an objectionable post on social media **PHOTO: PTI**

Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis explained that the post falsely linked a Hindu priest to a rape case, inciting anger. Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar added that the accused, a daily wage labourer from Nanded, had posted related content from Madhya Pradesh, which fuelled the unrest. *—PTI*

Kerala trust booked over foreign exchange violation

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has registered a case of foreign exchange violation against the Kunhahmed Musliyar Memorial Trust, a Kerala-based charity in Kasargod, and its chairman, NRI Ibrahim Ahmad Ali.

The investigation relates to over Rs 220 crore received from Ali since 2021, recorded as "unsecured loans" without proper agreement or repayment.The ED conducted searches at two Kasargod locations under the Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA). The Trust is not registered under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act and lacked the necessary permissions to get foreign contributions. Some foreign funds were used to buy agricultural land in India. *—PTI*

2 held in Jiribam murder, tribal bodies oppose

IMPHAL, 2 AUG

Two tribal organisations in Manipur on Saturday expressed concerns over the arrest of two person, in connection with the killings of six Meitei people in Jiribam district in 2024, claiming that the accused had no criminal history.

They also alleged that the arrests by the National Investigation Agency (NIA) and the Assam Police were "unjustified".

Churachandpur district-based Hmar Women expressed concern with the arbitrary arrest of Thanglienlal Hmar and Lalrosang Hmar, who were daily wage earners with no criminal record.

Both Thanglienlal and Lalrosang hailed from Moinathol Dilkshosh Ghaat in Assam's Cachar district Hmar. The latter was apprehended in Mizoram's Aizwal.

The organisation demanded the immediate release of the two arrested persons.

Another organisation Kuki Zo Council claimed that Thanglienlal was an "innocent boatman with involvement in the crime".

The day these six Meitei persons were abducted in November last year, 10 suspected militants were killed in an encounter with security forces. *—PTI*

MALAYALAM ACTOR NAVAS FOUND DEAD IN KERALA HOTEL ROOM

KOCHI, 2 AUGUST

Malayalam actor and mimicry artist Kalabhavan Navas was found dead in a hotel room in Chottanikkara on Friday evening. The 51-year-old was in town for a film shoot and had been staying at the hotel. Staff grew concerned after failing to reach him and alerted authorities.

He was taken to a nearby hospital, where he was declared dead on arrival. Police suspect cardiac arrest as the likely cause of death, though a post-mortem report is awaited.

A well-known figure in Kerala's entertainment scene, Navas began his career with the Kalabhavan troupe and earned acclaim as a mimicry artist, playback singer, and actor. *—PTI*

RAINS LASH HIMACHAL; FLOODS IN UNA

UNA/SHIMLA, 2 AUGUST

Normal life was thrown out of gear as heavy rains throughout the night flooded several areas in Himachal's Una.

Since Friday evening, it received extremely heavy rainfall measuring 222.8 mm, leading to water accumulation on roads, in markets, and other areas, severely impacting daily life. Around 10 feet of water flooded homes, prompting residents to climb onto roofs to seek safety.

This flood-like situation has resulted in significant losses for the industrial sector, residential neighbourhoods, and government offices, reports said. "Continuous rains have caused flooding and road blockages in many areas.

In light of the situation, educational institutions have been closed until further notice to ensure students' safety," Una District Magistrate Jatin Lal said. *—PTI*

Man slapped on flight goes missing

GUWAHATI, 2 AUG

Hussain Ahmed Majumdar, 32, from Cachar, Assam, has gone missing following a mid-air panic attack on an IndiGo flight from Mumbai to Silchar.

His family identified him in a viral video showing a passenger, Hafijul Rahaman, slapping him during the incident. Rahaman was detained at Kolkata airport and later released.

Hussain's family, worried as he has not contacted them and his phone is off, had initially gone to the Silchar airport expecting him.

They also reported the incident to police and CISF. Both men had left Kolkata airport on 31 July after a meeting mediated by CISF.

Meanwhile, IndiGo has imposed a flying ban on Rahaman to discourage such unruly behaviour onboard flights, the individual has been suspended from flying on any IndiGo flights, in accordance with regulatory provisions," the carrier said.

In a post on X, the airline on Saturday said that following due diligence, the incident involving an unruly customer has been formally reported to the relevant authorities for necessary action.

.The duration of the flying ban could not be immediately ascertained.

On Friday, a video clip of the incident shared on social media showed a passenger sitting in his seat suddenly slapping another passenger on the aisle who started crying and was moved away from the spot.

Also, a cabin crew member was heard telling the passenger on the seat "don't do" while another passenger was heard asking why did he slap

Man slapped on IndiGo flight goes missing **PHOTO: PTI**

and that he does not have any right to hit anybody. One passengersaid the victim was having a panic attack. *—PTI*

Loco pilots' duty breaks falsified to hide overtime

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

The All India Loco Running Staff Association (AILRSA) has accused railway zones of falsifying duty breaks in the Crew Management System (CMS) to conceal overutilisation of train drivers. The union alleges that officials are inserting fake breaks during trips lasting up to 16 hours, violating norms that restrict continuous work to nine hours and total duty to 11 hours. Ashok Kumar Raut, AILRSA General Secretary, stated, "Rail administrations are violating safety rules to cover staff shortages."

Following protests, the East Central Railway issued a circular warning against such falsification, with Raut revealing that in May and June 2025, divisions like Dhanbad recorded thousands of illegal trip breaks. He claimed these practices are driven by verbal orders from senior officials, endangering safety and violating operational standards.

–"This illegal and unsafe practice of inserting duty breaks in the system is being done on the verbal orders of some senior officials, such as the Chief Traction Loco Controller and Chief Crew Controller. Railways has outsourced CMS data entry work to private personnel, and they instruct them to insert such breaks," said Raut.*—PTI*

POSTERS GONE WRONG

Stay home to avoid rape: Gujarat cops to women

AHMEDABAD, 2 AUG

Posters allegedly sponsored by the Ahmedabad traffic police for a safety campaign have stirred up a controversy, as some of them urged women to stay home to avoid getting raped.

The posters pasted in a few localities in the city, have invited criticism from the opposition, which raised questions about women's safety in Gujarat.

Posters with statements, "do not attend late night parties, you could be raped or gangraped," and "do not go with your friend to dark, isolated areas, what if she is raped or gangraped?" were pasted on road dividers in Sola and Chandlodia areas and have since been removed.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic West), Neeta Desai clarified that the city traffic police had sponsored posters concerning road safety, not women's safety.

Satarkta Group, an NGO, had created the controversial posters without the consent of the traffic police.

"The NGO had approached us and said they wanted to organise traffic awareness programmes in schools and colleges and wanted our staff to accompany them. We were shown posters related to traffic awareness. But such controversial posters were not shown to us and were plastered without our consent," Desai said.

Gujarat Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) took a swipe at the BJP-led government, saying the posters exposed the state on women's safety.

"The BJP government in Gujarat talks about women's empowerment.... In the last three years, over 6,500 rapes and over 36 gangrapes occurred in Gujarat, with over five rapes per day," AAP said in a statement. *—PTI*

Posters used by the Ahmedabad traffic police as part of a safety campaign urge woman to stay indoors to avoid being raped, drawing much criticism from different quarters **PHOTO: X**

CZECH PRIDE PARADE

People march during a pride parade in Prague, Czech Republic. A pride parade is an event celebrating the LGBTQ+ community's achievements, legal rights, social progress, and self-acceptance. A great number of people gather for the event to show their support for the community ***PHOTO: PTI***

India toughens stance on no duty concessions to US

India has toughened its stance on extending duty concessions on agri products, dairy and GM foods in the proposed bilateral trade agreement (BTA) with the US.

With the US not able to finalise a deal with India so far, US President Donald Trump on Thursday announced imposition of an additional 25 per cent import duty on Indian goods entering American markets from 7 August.

Earlier, this duty was to be imposed from 1 August. The President has also not specified the penalty which he has announced on India for buying crude oil and military equipment from Russia.

Here is a list of questions and answers (Q&A) to explain reasons behind India's stand and impact of US tariffs on labour-intensive sectors:

India's average import duty is about 17 per cent, while the US' is 3.3 per cent ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Q:What is the India-US bilateral trade agreement (BTA)?

India and the US entered into negotiations for a fair, balanced and mutually beneficial BTA in March 2025 with a target to complete the first tranche/phase of the pact by fall (October-November) of 2025.

So far, five rounds of talks have been completed. For the next round, the US team, headed by Assistant US Trade Representative for South and Central Asia Brendan Lynch, is visiting India from 25 August.

Q:What is the aim of the BTA?

Normally in a trade agreement, two trading partners either significantly reduce or eliminate import duties on the maximum number of goods traded between them. Besides, they ease norms to promote trade in services and increase two-way investments.

The India-US BTA is aimed at more than doubling the bilateral trade to USD 500 billion by 2030 from the present USD 191 billion.

Q:What are the major demands of the two countries from each other in the BTA?

The US wants duty concessions on certain industrial goods, automobiles, especially electric vehicles, wines, petrochemical products, agri goods, dairy items, apples, tree nuts, and genetically-modified crops.

India is seeking the removal of this additional tariff (25 per cent now) and cut in tariffs on steel and aluminium (50 per cent), auto sector (25 per cent), labour-intensive sectors, such as textiles, gems and jewellery, leather goods, garments, plastics, chemicals, shrimp, oil seeds, grapes, and bananas.

Q:How much tariff is imposed by the US on Indian goods at present?

India's average import duty is about 17 per cent, while the US' is 3.3 per cent.

On 2 April, the US announced to impose 26 per cent duty (16 per cent reciprocal tariff and 10 per cent baseline tariff).

At present, only the baseline tariff is in force. It is over and above the existing import duty on Indian goods.

For example, before 2 April, the Indian textiles were attracting a 6-9 per cent tariff in America. With the baseline tariff, it rose to 16-19 per cent. But from 7 August, the sector will attract a 31-34 per cent duty. The baseline tariff will be replaced by 25 per cent duty notified on 31 July, by the White House.

However, certain products are exempted from these tariffs such as pharmaceutical, electronics and energy products.

Q: From when the 25 per cent duty will come into force?

The duty, announced this week, will come into force from 7 August, 9.30am IST. The executive order has also clarified that goods in transit until 5 October, 12.01am eastern daylight time (EDT), or 09.30am IST, will be subject to a 10 per cent tariff, provided that such goods have entered into transit before 7 August, 12.01 am EDT.

Q:Why India is not ready to provide duty concessions on dairy, agri and GM foods?

Agri: Farm livelihoods are at stake.

This is a politically and economically sensitive area as over 700 million people in India's rural economy are dependent on the sector.

If India removes tariffs, cheap, subsidised US grains could flood Indian markets during global price crashes.

Unlike the US, where agriculture is corporatised, Indian farming is a livelihood issue. Tariffs are essential to protect small farmers, manage price volatility, and ensure food security.

Dairy: India wants to safeguard its small farmers. GTRI stated that the US argues that India's GM-free feed certification and facility registration protocols effectively bar American dairy imports.

"Indian rules prohibit imports from animals fed with animal-derived feed' for example, butter from a cow fed meat' due to religious sensitivities. India considers this policy non-negotiable," GTRI has said.

GM Food: These are created by inserting specific genes, often from bacteria, viruses, other plants, or occasionally animals, into a plant's DNA to introduce new traits, such as pest resistance or herbicide tolerance.

Allowing the import of GM products such as soybean meal and distillers dried grains with solubles (DDGS) for animal feed would affect India's agricultural exports to the EU, a key destination for Indian exporters —*PTI*

SALAR

Antarctic research decline, & timing couldn't be worse

Ice loss in Antarctica not only contributes to sea level rise, but impacts wildlife habitats and local food chains ***PHOTO: PTI***

Ice loss in Antarctica and its impact on the planet sea level rise, changes to ocean currents and disturbance of wildlife and food webs – has been in the news a lot lately. All of these threats were likely on the minds of the delegates to the annual Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting, which finishes up today in Milan, Italy.

This meeting is where decisions are made about the continent's future. These decisions rely on evidence from scientific research. Moreover, only countries that produce significant Antarctic research – as well as being parties to the treaty – get to have a final say in these decisions.

Our new report – published as a preprint through the University of the Arctic – shows the rate of research on the Antarctic and Southern Ocean is falling at exactly the time when it should be increasing. Moreover, research leadership is changing, with China taking the lead for the first time.

This points to a dangerous disinvestment in Antarctic research just when it is needed, alongside a changing of the guard in national influence. Antarctica and the research done there are key to everyone's future, so it's vital to understand what this change might lead to.

Why is Antarctic research so important?

With the Antarctic region rapidly warming, its ice shelves destabilising and sea ice shrinking, understanding the South Polar environment is more crucial than ever.

Ice loss in Antarctica not only contributes to sea level rise, but impacts wildlife habitats and local food chains. It also changes the dynamics of ocean currents, which could interfere with global food webs, including international fisheries that supply a growing amount of food.

Research to understand these impacts is vital. First, knowing the impact of our actions – particularly carbon emissions – gives us an increased drive to make changes and lobby governments to do so.

Second, even when changes are already locked in, to prepare ourselves we need to know what these changes will look like.

And third, we need to understand the threats to the Antarctic and Southern Ocean environment to govern it properly. This is where the treaty comes in.

What is the Antarctic Treaty?

The region below 60 degrees south is governed by the 1959 Antarctic Treaty, along with subsequent agreements. Together they are known as the Antarctic Treaty System.

Fifty-eight countries are parties to the treaty, but only 29 of them – called consultative parties – can make binding decisions about the region. They comprise the 12 original signatories from 1959, along with 17 more recent signatory nations that produce substantial scientific research relating to Antarctica.

This makes research a key part of a nation's influence over what happens in Antarctica.

For most of its history, the Antarctic Treaty System has functioned remarkably well. It maintained peace in the region during the Cold War, facilitated scientific cooperation, and put arguments about territorial claims on indefinite hold. It indefinitely forbade mining, and managed fisheries.

Lately, however, there has been growing dysfunction in the treaty system.

Environmental protections that might seem obvious have stalled.Because decisions are made by consensus, any country can effectively block progress. Russia and China – both long-term actors in the system – have been at the centre of the impasse.

What did our report find?

Tracking the amount of Antarctic research being done tells us whether nations as a whole are investing enough in understanding the region and its global impact.

It also tells us which nations are investing the most and are therefore likely to have substantial influence.

Our new report examined the number of papers published on Antarctic and Southern Ocean topics from 2016 to 2024, using the Scopus database. We also looked at other factors, such as the countries affiliated with each paper.

The results show five significant changes are happening in the world of Antarctic research.

The number of Antarctic and Southern Ocean publications peaked in 2021 and then fell slightly yearly through to 2024.

While the US has for decades been the leader in Antarctic research, China overtook them in 2022.

If we look only at the high-quality publications China still took over the US, in 2024.

Although collaboration in publications is higher for Antarctic research than in non-Antarctic fields, Russia, India and China have anomalously low rates of co-authorship compared with many other signatory countries.

Why is this research decline a problem?

A recent parliamentary inquiry in Australia emphasised the need for funding certainty. In the UK, a House of Commons committee report considered it "imperative for the UK to significantly expand its research efforts in Antarctica", in particular in relation to sea level rise.

US commentators have pointed to the inadequacy of the country's icebreaker infrastructure. The Trump administration's recent cuts to Antarctic funding are only likely to exacerbate the situation. Meanwhile China has built a fifth station in Antarctica and announced plans for a sixth.

Given the nation's population and global influence, China's leadership in Antarctic research is not surprising. If China were to take a lead in Antarctic environmental protection that matched its scientific heft, its move to lead position in the research ranks could be positive. Stronger multi-country collaboration in research could also strengthen overall cooperation.

But the overall drop in global Antarctic research investment is a problem however you look at it.

We ignore it at our peril. —*The Conversation*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

Teacher inspires entire village to transform school in Meghalaya

In the remote village of Raibah, nestled in the misty foothills of Mawsynram, known as the wettest place on Earth, an eerie silence used to surround a dilapidated school building a few years ago, but now the joyful whoops of children echo through the dewy air there.

The transformation was made possible by the efforts of a newly appointed teacher who not only performed physical labour, but also inspired the villagers, as well as others, to take part in making the school, which turned 75 this year, beautiful again.

When Batskhem Thabah was posted to the Raibah Government Lower Primary School in 2021, he found a place long abandoned by learning.

Its walls were cracked, windows damaged, the roof was leaking under monsoon downpours, and classrooms overtaken by shrubs after nearly two years of COVID-19-induced closure.

The school had no permanent staff and a handful of children turned up sporadically.

"It took the entire village to rebuild the school, but it began with a single man who sparked the desire among them to act," said Pynshailang Dohling, the village headman of Raibah.

Rather than request a transfer, the young teacher chose to stay and reconstruct it from scratch. He began cleaning the grounds with the help of children, planted flowers to make the compound colourful, and even paid the salary of a second teacher from his own earnings to help manage the institute.

"I knew this wasn't going to be easy. But I also knew that even the smallest step could spark something big," said Thabah, who had previously volunteered in rural education camps as a National Service Scheme (NSS) student and worked as a tour guide across Meghalaya, witnessing the gaps in far-flung places.

Thabah's dream was to turn Raibah into a "green school," where sustainability and education could grow hand in hand. His early efforts, though modest—sweeping, gardening, encouraging hygienic practices—began changing the atmosphere.

The students responded enthusiastically, taking responsibility for daily chores, maintaining the campus, and influencing their families.

"They weren't just students; they became caretakers of the school," Thabah recalled.

With no funds or materials, the children and their teacher improvised. Bamboo tubes replaced plastic pencil cases, areca palm leaves became lunch plates, and outdoor activities became classroom tools.

The school had no permanent staff and a handful of children turned up sporadically ***PHOTO:PTI***

Science lessons merged with gardening and language was taught through storytelling and songs.

"The school compound became a living space," he said.

When one student fell seriously ill and was absent for a long time, his classmates regularly visited him, prayed for him, and brought him snacks.

"Their compassion made me believe that we were not just building a school, but a community," Thabah added.

The biggest obstacle, however, remained the school building itself. With its crumbling infrastructure, the structure posed real danger, especially during the long, punishing monsoon.

Recognising the urgent need for repairs, Thabah contacted a friend, Ibarihun Majaw, who had successfully led a crowdfunding campaign during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Along with two fellow educators, Majaw visited Raibah and saw the conditions firsthand.Majaw launched a campaign on a crowdfunding platform and the goal was met within a week. A local entrepreneur also pitched in to install a new roof for the school building.

With logistical support from Shillong and hands-on help from the community, the school underwent a remarkable change.

Villagers brought in materials, constructed bamboo fencing, and cleaned the area. Even residents with no school-going children participated.

"We rebuilt it together. It became a school of the people," said Bah Thongni, a villager.

An unused Anganwadi centre nearby was also renovated and turned into an additional classroom to ease the space crunch.

Thabah also collaborated with the Directorate of Educational Research and Training (DERT) to implement multi-grade teaching strategies—from outdoor alphabet trails to phonics songs and practical tasks that boosted student participation.

A key breakthrough came through his partnership with his alma mater, St Edmund's College, Shillong.

Under the college's social work department, students began weekly fieldwork in Raibah through a model called TALES - Tangible Active Learning and Engagement Scaffolds - bringing new ideas and energy into the rural classroom.

Thabah said he also learnt a lot from locals—to fish, farm, and he even launched a conservation initiative along with the villagers to protect a local stream's biodiversity.

Reading culture was nurtured through help from The Owl Library, which donated 100 books to create a mini-library. Additional support came from another school, which donated study kits and sports materials.

Children were grouped into houses named after Gandhi, Teresa, Kalam, and Mandela, fostering healthy competition and identity.

In 2024, Thabah and his team received the Green Hub x Royal Enfield Conservation Grant to establish the Raibah Living Library.

It now documents oral histories, traditional medicinal plants, and folk tales—preserving the Khasi heritage, including stories of freedom fighter U Sngap Singh Syiem, who resisted British rule and died in Raibah.

In late 2023, Thabah was transferred, causing heartbreak to the villagers and students. He, however, is still in contact with the village.

"Today, Raibah is no longer just a village with a school; it is a community transformed," the headman said. —*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Jeannie Seely, 'Don't Touch Me' singer, dies at 85

NEW YORK, 2 AUG

Jeannie Seely, the renowned country singer known as "Miss Country Soul," has died at age 85 from complications of an intestinal infection. Her publicist, Don Murry Grubbs, confirmed her passing. Seely, famous for 'Don't Touch Me,' was a trailblazer for women in country music and celebrated for her spirited style. She battled health issues recently, including back surgeries and pneumonia, but remained optimistic, saying, "The unsinkable Seely is working her way back." Born in July 1940 in Titusville, Pennsylvania, she began her career singing on local radio and TV before moving to Los Angeles and then Nashville. Her hit 'Don't Touch Me' earned her a Grammy. She had numerous hits in the 60s and 70s. *—PTI*

Colombia ex-Prez Uribe sentenced to 12yrs house arrest

BOGOTA, 2 AUG

Former Colombian president Álvaro Uribe has been sentenced to 12 years' house arrest for witness tampering and bribery, in a case that has divided Colombia. The 73-year-old denies wrongdoing, claiming "Politics prevailed over the law." The trial revealed that Uribe allegedly tried to influence witnesses linked to paramilitary groups from the 1990s. Judge Sandra Heredia refused his request to remain free during appeals, citing risk of flight, and banned him from public office for eight years, fining him $776,000. Uribe, a polarising figure, led Colombia from 2002 to 2010 has been heavily criticised for human rights abuses. The appeals process will conclude by October, with further challenges possible. *—PTI*

Parents leave 10-yr-old at airport, go on trip

MADRID, 2 AUG

A woman claiming to be an air-operations coordinator at a Spanish airport alleged on TikTok that parents left their 10-year-old son at the terminal after his passport expired. The woman, Lilian, said authorities found the boy alone, who told police his parents were on a plane heading home for vacation. "The explanation given was that the child was travelling with an expired passport from Spain, and needed a travel visa," she said. "How is it possible for parents to leave their ten-year-old son at the terminal because he cannot travel due to documentation issues?" The airport contacted the plane's pilot, who later located the parents, travelling with a younger child, and they were taken to police. *—Agencies*

Russia: Can deal with 2 nuke subs Trump deployed

The subs were moved after Russia's 'dead hand' threat

MOSCOW, 1 AUG

Trump had ordered the redeployment of 2 US nuclear submarines near Russia *PHOTO: X*

There are enough Russian nuclear submarines in the high seas to tackle two American subs dispatched by US President Donald Trump, a member of the Russian Parliament Duma has said.

"The number of Russian nuclear submarines in the world's oceans is significantly higher than the American ones, and the subs that US President Donald Trump ordered to be redirected to the appropriate regions have long been under their control. So no response from Russiais required," a senior Russian lawmaker, Viktor Vodolatsky, said.

On Friday, Trump wrote on his Truth Social post that he had ordered the redeployment of US submarines "to appropriate regions" allegedly over "extremely provocative statements" by Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev.

When responding to Trump's claims that the Russian economy was "dead," Medvedev had reminded the US President about the "dead hand," a reference to a Cold-War system, where the Soviet Union would automatically launch nuclear strikes if the USSR leadership was attacked. Trump seems to think that this meant Russia was going nuclear. *—PTI*

Putin okays Ukraine peace talks if there are no cameras

MOSCOW, 2 AUG

3 people died in Russia after Ukrainian launched drone strikes. The strikes were a retaliation after Russia killed 31 killed by Russia on Friday

Shortly after US President Donald Trump issued a 10-day deadline to Russia to end its offensive in Ukraine, Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Moscow is willing to resume peace talks with Kiev if there are no cameras.

"We agreed that we could conduct negotiations without cameras and in a calm atmosphere," Putin said Friday.

However, Putin reaffirmed that Moscow's strategic objective is unchanged.

He had earlier been in Belarus, where he said that Russia's deadliest hypersonic missile would enter service by the end of the year.

Putin dismissed Ukrainian President Volodmyr Zelenskyy's appeal for a regime change in Moscow.

"Our political regime is grounded in the Constitution of the Russian Federation, and our government was formed in full compliance with the basic law," Putin said. "The same cannot be said about Ukraine."

Zelenskyy had said, "I believe Russia can be pushed to stop this war... But if the world doesn't aim to change the regime in Russia, that means even after the war ends, Moscow will still try to destabilize neighbouring countries." *—Agencies*

WHO HAS BETTER NUKE SUB ARSENA: US OR RUSSIA?

With US President Donald Trump moving two nuclear submarines closer to Russia, the threat of a direct conflict between Moscow and Washington has shot up. Here's a look at both of their submarines:

US

Total submarines in fleet: 71

14 Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs): They can carry about 20 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)

53 Nuclear Powered attack submarines (SSNs): These include fast attack models like Virginia-class SSNs, USS Seawolf and the 688-class, which forms the backbone of the America Navy.

4 Guided Missile Submarines (SSGN)

RUSSIA

Total submarines in fleet: 64

16 Ballistic Missile Submarines (SSBNs): The eight Borei-class submarines hold 16 SLBMs and 6 torpedo launchers while the six Deltas are armed with 16 SLBMs.

14 Nuclear Powered attack submarines (SSNs): Designed for anti-ship or long-range land attacks with a torpedoes and missiles.

11 Nuclear powered cruise missile submarines

23 Diesel electric attack submarines (SSKs)

> **Words are very important, and can often lead to unintended consequences, I hope this will not be one of those instances.... A threat was made so I have to be very careful.... When you talk about nuclear, we have to be prepared, and we're totally prepared**
>
> —Donald Trump, US President

> **Trump's playing the ultimatum game with Russia: 50 days or 10... He should remember 2 things: 1. Russia isn't Israel or even Iran. 2. Each new ultimatum is a threat and a step towards war. Not between Russia and Ukraine, but with his own country**
>
> —Dmitry Medvedev, Deputy Chairman of Russia's Security Council

> **While Europeans are hysterically pushing for Ukraine's integration into NATO and preparing for potential conflict with Russia, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently reaffirmed a responsible stance, explicitly stating that a direct military confrontation between the United States and Russia must be avoided. We wholeheartedly concur with this position**
>
> —Sergei Lavrov, Russian Foreign Minister

Families of hostages protest, demanding their release from Hamas captivity at the 'hostages square' in Tel Aviv, Israel on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

Israel kills 18 in Gaza, 7 more die of hunger

DEIR AL-BALAH, 2 AUG

Hospitals in Gaza reported the killing of more than a dozen people, eight of them food-seekers, by Israeli fire on Saturday as Palestinians endured severe risks searching for food amid airdrops and restrictions on overland aid delivery. Meanwhile, seven Palestinians died of malnutrition-related causes in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, the territory's health ministry said on Saturday.

Near a Gaza Humanitarian Foundation distribution site, Yahia Youssef, who had come to seek aid Saturday morning, described a panicked scene now grimly familiar. After helping carry out three people wounded by gunshots, he said he looked around and saw others lying on the ground bleeding.

"It's the same daily episode," Youssef said.

Meanwhile, US President Donald Trump's special envoy Steve Witkoff joined them, a week after quitting ceasefire talks, blaming Hamas's intransigence and pledging to find other ways to free hostages and make Gaza safe.

In Tel Aviv, families of hostages protested and urged Israel's government to push harder for the release of their loved ones, including those shown in footage released by militant groups earlier this week.

Of the 251 hostages who were abducted by Hamas-led militants, around 20 are believed to be alive in Gaza *—PTI*

After report shows job market weakens, Trump fires agency's head

WASHINGTON, 2 AUG

After a Bureau of Labor Statistics report showed that hiring slowed in July, and was weaker in May and June than previously reported, US President Donald Trump fired the head of the agency.

Trump, in a post on his social media platform, alleged that the figures were manipulated for political reasons and said that Erika McEntarfer, the Bureau's Director, appointed by former president Joe Biden, should be fired. He provided no evidence for the charge.

"I have directed my Team to fire this Biden Political Appointee, IMMEDIATELY," Trump said on Truth Social. "She will be replaced with someone much more competent and qualified."

Erika McEntarfer *PHOTO: US BUREAU OF LABOR STATISTICS*

Trump later posted: "In my opinion, today's Jobs Numbers were RIGGED in order to make the Republicans, and ME, look bad."

Job gains in May were revised down to just 19,000 from a previously revised 125,000, and for June, they were cut to 14,000 from 147,000. In July, only 73,000 positions were added. The unemployment rate ticked up to a still-low 4.2 per cent from 4.1 per cent.

FED RESERVE GUV STEPS DOWN

The Federal Reserve announced that Governor Adriana Kugler will step down next week. This comes after Trump said that Fed Chair Jerome Powell is "a stubborn MORON, must substantially lower interest rates, NOW."

Powell has been refusing to cut rates as he believes it would take months evaluate the impact of tariffs before such a decision could be made. *—PTI*

Govt halts $339M grants to UCLA for 'rights violations'

The Trump administration is freezing $339 million in research grants to the University of California, Los Angeles, accusing the school of civil rights violations related to antisemitism, affirmative action and women's sports, according to a person familiar with the matter. The federal government has frozen or paused federal funding over similar allegations against private colleges, but this is one of the rare cases in which it has targeted a public university.

Ghislaine moved to low-security prison in a 'cover up?'

Sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein's former girlfriend and accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell, has been moved to a minimum security facility in Texas, the United States Bureau of Prisons said, triggering an angry reaction from some victims. Maxwell was moved from the Federal Correctional Institution Tallahassee - a low-security prison in Florida - to the minimum security Federal Prison Camp in Texas. Victims said it was "preferential treatment", and a "cover-up".

Bangkok protests against PM after Cambodia conflict

BANGKOK, 2 AUG

Protesters rallied Saturday in the Thai capital to demand the resignation of court-suspended Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra and in support of the armed forces following a violent border dispute with Cambodia that killed more than three dozen people and displaced over 260,000.

Gathered at Bangkok's Victory Monument despite soaring temperatures, many sang patriotic songs and listened to speeches denouncing Paetongtarn and her father, former leader Thaksin Shinawatra, and voiced their backing of the country's army.

Police said there were about two thousand protesters by mid-afternoon, though more were expected to join as the temperature cooled.

A court suspened the prime minster last month after Hun Sen leaked a phone call in which she called him "uncle" and appeared to denigrate a Thai General, angering many.

The recent clashes ended with an uneasy Malaysian-brokered ceasefire on 29 July.

Meanwhile, Cambodia welcomed the return of two wounded soldiers who had been captured by the Thai army.

However, 18 other Cambodian troops captured during skirmishes on Tuesday remain in Thai custody. *—PTI*

SpaceX delivers four astronauts to ISS in 15 hours

CAPE CANAVERAL, 2 AUG

A crew of four astronauts from the US, Russia, and Japan has arrived at the International Space Station (ISS) after a rapid 15-hour journey. The crew, launched from NASA's Kennedy Space Centre aboard a SpaceX capsule, will spend at least six months at the orbital laboratory, replacing colleagues who have been there since March. SpaceX is expected to bring the previous crew back as early as Wednesday.

The arriving astronauts are NASA's Zena Cardman and Mike Fincke, Japan's Kimiya Yui, and Russia's Oleg Platonov. Cardman and Yui, initially assigned to other missions, swapped roles due to delays with the Boeing Starliner programme, which has been grounded until 2026.

Their arrival temporarily increases the station's crew to 11, with the crew welcoming them with hot food and drinks. *—PTI*

'DEMOCRACY RENDERED VOID'

Pakistan Opposition alliance slams 'hybrid' govt regime

ISLAMABAD, 1 AUG

Leaders of the TTAP said the hybrid model, where the military enjoys a power share, was unconstitutional, in a press conference *PHOTO: FB*

A coalition of Pakistan's six Opposition parties Friday slammed the current "hybrid" political system and called for a national dialogue aimed at creating a new democratic charter.

The "hybrid model" refers the military enjoying a major power share.

Leaders of the Tehreek-e-Tahafuz-e-Aayeen-e-Pakistan or TTAP (the movement for protection of the Constitution of Pakistan) made the demand during a press conference on the second day of their multi-party conference.

TTAP, which formed last year and formalised its organisational structure last month, pledged support for all anti-government protests and said they discussed the prevailing political conditions during their conference.

"As a result of the constant attacks of the hybrid system, the Constitution of Pakistan, the human rights given in it from Articles 8 to 11, and the parliamentary democratic system have become meaningless, and today the social contract between the people and the state has been shattered." a statement said.

The alliance condemned the "unjust imprisonment" of former prime minister Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi, demanding their early release and immediate appointment of their pending cases. *—PTI*

Ex-soldier shoots 4 in Montana, manhunt launched

ANACONDA, 2 AUG

Authorities are searching a mountainous area of western Montana for Michael Paul Brown, 45, after he opened fire at The Owl Bar in Anaconda, killing four people. Brown fled in a white pickup truck but later abandoned it, said Lee Johnson of the Montana Division of Criminal Investigation. Residents are urged to stay indoors as Brown, believed to be armed, remains extremely dangerous.

Anaconda, about 40km northwest of Butte, is a historic mining town nestled among mountains. Brown, a former US Army armour crewman and National Guardsman, reportedly knew the victims and had no known disputes with them.

Brown's niece, Clare Boyle, told the AP that her uncle struggles with mental illness. Authorities have cordoned off Stumptown Road, with helicopters searching nearby mountainsides. *—PTI*

'Donors offer $5B for Reko Diq mine in Balochistan'

ISLAMABAD, 2 AUG

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Pakistan received a USD 5 billion offer from multinational donors and agencies to execute the multibillion-dollar Reko Diq copper and gold mining project in the Balochistan region, according to a media report.

The donors included the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Islamic Development Bank (IDB), International Finance Corporation (IFC) and US Exim Bank. Development agencies from Germany and Denmark have also offered financing.

The commitments received from foreign donors were more than the funding requirement for the Reko Diq project, which is estimated at USD 3 billion, sources told The Express Tribune newspaper.

According to sources, the financial close of the project is at an advanced stage and Petroleum Minister Ali Pervaiz Malik, backed by the Special Investment Facilitation Council (SIFC), is taking the lead and making aggressive efforts to expedite work.

Notably, US Exim Bank has offered no cap on financing and is ready to provide capital, which Pakistan and other partners desperately need.

The Reko Diq copper and gold project, located in the Chagai district of Balochistan, reportedly has the world's largest untapped copper reserves. The project, revived by Canada's Barrick Gold, is expected to start producing copper and gold by 2028. *—PTI*

PHOTO: FREEPIK

Semiconductor mission to boost digital sovereignty

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

India's ambitious semiconductor initiative is seen as vital for securing the country's digital independence. Experts emphasise that all digital infrastructure, including AI and cloud systems, depends on chips. Sunil Gupta of ASSOCHAM stated, "It all starts at the chip level. From chip design to applications, India aims to fully own this stack." The India's Semiconductor Mission seeks to develop domestic capabilities in chip design, fabrication, and assembly. Gupta added, "Starting with 28nm chips, India plans to produce high-end 2-3nm chips and even GPUs within five years." He also stated efforts to source rare earth metals. Dipali Pillai of Bharath Cloud said, "Having everything in-house is crucial for growth & security, supported by USD 20 million investment." ***—PTI***

Evo11ve.AI opens AI coach portal for CBSE students

CHENNAI, 2 AUG

Education technology company Evo11ve.AI launched the 'Evo11ve AI Coach', an online portal designed to benefit the student community, an official said on Saturday. Targeted at students from classes 6 to 12 under the CBSE curriculum, the dedicated web portal aims to significantly improve grade averages and enhance academic outcomes, said Swapna Reddy, founder and CEO of Evo11ve.AI, in a statement. According to Reddy, the AI-driven solution enables intelligent, adaptive learning by understanding the level and context of each student. It can tailor learning paths to address gaps & support deeper understanding where necessary. Evo11ve.AI recently conducted 'CreAltive 2025' contest for CBSE students from 6 to 12 classes. ***—PTI***

'India on the brink of cybersecurity revolution'

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

India is on the brink of a cybersecurity revolution, says Prayank Swaroop, Partner at Accel, who believes this moment could define the next generation of global security firms. Speaking at Accel's Cybersecurity Summit in Bengaluru, Swaroop highlighted that while India has over 1,400 cybersecurity startups, only 235 have secured funding and just six have gone public a clear sign of untapped potential. With the global cybersecurity market projected to reach $377 billion in the next three years, Indian founders have a strong opportunity to build world-class solutions. He pointed to Accel's early backing of CrowdStrike, now worth over $116 billion. ***—PTI***

ITC reports Rs 5,343 cr profit for June quarter

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

ITC Ltd announced a consolidated net profit of Rs 5,343.41 crore for the June quarter, surpassing the Rs 5,176.99 crore recorded in the same period last year. Revenue from operations increased to Rs 23,129.35 crore from Rs 19,350.08 crore, driven by cigarettes, agri-business, and FMCG segments. Total expenses rose by 26.73 per cent to Rs 16,752.31 crore, while total income, including other income, grew 18.86 per cent to Rs 23,811.56 crore. The company highlighted strong performances from group companies such as ITC Infotech, Surya Nepal, and ITC Hotels. However, results are not fully comparable due to acquisition of Sresta Natural Bioproducts, owner of 24 Mantra Organic, in June 2025. ITC remains optimistic about India's resilient macroeconomic fundamentals amid global uncertainties. ***—PTI***

'Crude prices may hit $80 amid US-Russia tensions'

US tariffs more biased against Indian manufacturers

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Brent crude oil prices are expected to increase to around USD 80 per barrel in the coming months, as geopolitical tensions between the United States and Russia threaten to disrupt the global oil supply chain. Oil market experts warn of upward pressure on prices amid rising risks.

NS Ramaswamy, Head of Commodities at Ventura, stated, "Brent Oil (Oct'25) from USD 72.07 has a short-term target of USD 76. Year-end 2025 could reach USD 80-82. Downside support and cap at USD 69."

He explained that US President Donald Trump's deadline for Russia to end the Ukraine conflict could lead to additional sanctions and tariffs, pushing prices higher. "Countries dependent on Russian crude face a tough choice between cheaper oil and US tariffs," he added.

Experts expect WTI Crude to rise from USD 69.65 to USD 73 in the short term, with potential to reach USD 76-79 by 2025's end ***PHOTO: FREEPIK***

Experts expect WTI Crude (September 2025) to rise from USD 69.65 to USD 73 in the short term, with potential to reach USD 76-79 by 2025's end. A supply shock caused by reduced capacity could push prices even higher through 2026.

Additionally, the tariff on Indian exports places domestic auto component industry and tyre makers in an unfavourable position as compared with Asian peers like Japan, Vietnam, and Indonesia, which face lower duties, rating firm Icra said on Saturday.

The US administration has announced imposition of the tariff on all goods coming from India from 7 August.

"Imposition of a 25 per cent tariff by the US on Indian imports has raised concerns across India's automotive and tyre industries, both of which maintain substantial export exposure to the US market," it noted.

With the US accounting for 27 per cent of India's auto component exports and 17 per cent of tyre exports, the tariff hike places Indian manufacturers at a disadvantage compared to Asian peers such as Japan, Vietnam, & Indonesia, which face lower or preferential duties, Icra said. *—ANI/ PTI*

RS 1,01,795 CR OUTFLOWS

FPIs pullout Rs 17,741 cr from equities: NSDL

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) reversed course in July, turning net sellers in the Indian equity market with a total outflow of Rs 17,741 crore, according to NSDL data.

This marks the first month of negative investment after three consecutive months of inflows—April, May, and June.

The sharp shift was driven by a surge in selling during the last week of July, with Rs 17,390.6 crore pulled out between 28 July and 1 August, significantly impacting the monthly figures.

The recent sell-off is largely attributed to the US's reciprocal tariffs, which have unsettled global trade and investor sentiment.

These tariffs have raised concerns over market stability, prompting FPIs to reassess their exposure.

Data shows May experienced the highest inflows of 2025, while January saw the largest sell-off with Rs 78,027 crore in net sales. Cumulatively, FPI outflows for the year have now exceeded Rs 1,01,795 crore.

While June saw a positive net investment of Rs 14,590 crore, earlier months witnessed significant sell-offs—March saw Rs 3,973 crore sold, while January and February recorded Rs 78,027 crore and Rs 34,574 crore worth of equities offloaded, respectively.

The reversal in FPI sentiment raises concerns for Indian equities, which had enjoyed robust foreign support in recent months.

Geopolitical tensions and global trade uncertainties are expected to influence FPI behaviour further in the coming weeks. *—ANI*

CHATGPT & GOOGLE

1 in 3 Indians use tech tools for help: Survey

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Choosing a dish at a restaurant or making a gift purchase decision, a growing number of Indians are turning to technology to navigate overthinking, which has become a part of daily life of the people, as per a survey.

New age digital tools as conversational AI platform ChatGPT and search engine Google, are found to be increasingly used by Indians for clarity, in case they are faced with uncertainty, said a joint report from Center Fresh and YouGov.

The survey, with a sample size of 2,100 respondents, found that 81 per cent of Indians spend over three hours a day overthinking, with one in four admitting "it's a constant habit".

According to the 'India Overthinking Report', one in three have used Google or ChatGPT to navigate overthinking – from decoding a short message to making a gift purchase decision.

PHOTO: FREEPIK

- According to a report, one in three have used Google or ChatGPT to navigate overthinking – from decoding a short message to making a gift purchase decision

The survey included students, working professionals and self-employed across the country, covering Tier I, II & III cities, diving into four key areas – food and lifestyle habits, digital and social life, dating & relationships and career & professional life. *—PTI*

SBI predicts 25bps rate cut before Diwali

NEW DELHI, 2 AUGUST

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is expected to cut the repo rate by 25 basis points (bps) during its upcoming Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting from 5 to 7 August, according to a report by the State Bank of India (SBI).

SBI argues that a frontloaded rate cut could stimulate credit growth ahead of the festive season, calling it an "early Diwali" for the economy. Drawing on past trends, the report highlights that repo rate cuts before Diwali consistently lead to higher credit demand. For example, a 25-bps cut in August 2017 resulted in incremental credit growth of Rs 1.96 trillion by Diwali, with nearly 30 per cent in personal loans.

With inflation remaining well within the RBI's target range for several months, SBI warns that maintaining a restrictive stance risks long-term economic damage. "The marginal benefit of waiting is low, while the cost of inaction in terms of lost output and weakened investment sentiment could be significant," the report states.

If inflation stays subdued, delaying action could worsen the output gap ***PHOTO: ANI***

SBI further cautions against committing a "Type II error" — delaying a rate cut under the assumption that low inflation is temporary. If inflation stays subdued, delaying action could worsen the output gap.

The report also notes that several macroeconomic indicators, including tariff uncertainties and GDP forecasts, are being frontloaded, further strengthening the case for early monetary easing.

If the RBI acts as expected, it would mark the first rate cut since February 2023, potentially boosting consumer sentiment and credit offtake ahead of the festive period. *–ANI*

RBI approves NICBL, Saraswat bank merger

MUMBAI, 2 AUGUST

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the merger of the troubled New India Co-operative Bank Ltd (NICBL) with Saraswat Co-operative Bank. Acting on requests from both lenders, following shareholder approval, the RBI sanctioned the amalgamation . As part of the merger, Saraswat Bank will take over all assets and liabilities of NICBL. From 4 August, all NICBL branches will operate as Saraswat Bank branches. This move is expected to strengthen the co-operative banking sector by safeguarding depositors' interests and ensuring continuity of services. *—PTI*

ARCIL files draft, JSW to launch 3.6K cr IPO

NEW DELHI, 2 AUGUST

Avenue Capital Group-backed Asset Reconstruction Company (India) Ltd (ARCIL) has filed its preliminary papers with the markets regulator SEBI to mobilise funds through an initial share sale.

ARCIL facilitates debt resolution and also the first asset reconstruction company to be incorporated in the country.

The Initial Public Offering (IPO) is entirely an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 10.54 crore equity shares by promoters and other shareholders, according to the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) filed on Friday.

JSW Cement

JSW Cement, part of Sajjan Jindal-promoted diversified JSW Group, is set to launch its truncated Rs 3,600-crore IPO on 7 August.

PHOTO: ANI

The total size of the issue, however, is lower than the earlier proposed issue of up to Rs 4,000 crore, according to the latest RHP.

The IPO will open for public subscription on 7 August and closes on 11 August, while the anchor investor bidding date would be 6 August for JSW Cement, according to the Red Herring Prospectus (RHP) filed on Friday.

The initial share sale comprises a fresh issue of equity shares worth Rs 1,600 crore and an Offer for Sale of shares worth up to Rs 2,000 crore by investor shareholders. *—PTI*

Mark meets AI researcher Dietke, make $250M job offer

NEW YORK, 2 AUG

For a few months now, Meta has been on an aggressive investment spree to strengthen its artificial intelligence abilities.

In recent weeks, Meta CEO Mark Zuckerberg seems to have hired a 24-year-old AI researcher - Matt Dietke. The researcher allegedly refused to accept Meta's $125 million offer initially, which led to Zuckerberg personally meeting with him. After the meeting, he successfully concluded the deal with a revised four-year compensation package reportedly worth $250 million, as the CEO attempts to build 'superintelligence'.

In 2023, Deitke co-founded Vercept, a startup that's 10 people strong & focused on autonomous AI agents capable of navigating and executing tasks online. *—Agencies*

Tesla ordered to pay over $240M in Autopilot crash

MIAMI, 2 AUG

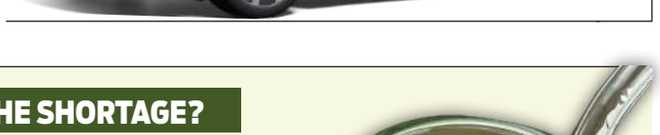
A Miami jury has ruled that Tesla is partly responsible for a fatal 2019 crash in Florida involving its Autopilot system, ordering the company to pay over $240 million in damages. The case involved 22-year-old Naibel Benavides Leon, who was killed, and her boyfriend Dillon Angulo, who was seriously injured, when a Tesla driven by George McGee crashed into their parked car as they stargazed.

Although McGee admitted he was distracted by his phone and speeding, the jury found Tesla's Autopilot system defective and liable. Lawyers argued that Tesla misled customers by using the term Autopilot, encouraging overreliance on a system not designed for full self-driving especially on small, dark roads.

The plaintiffs also accused Tesla of hiding or misplacing critical evidence, including crash data and video, which a forensic expert later uncovered. Tesla claimed it made an honest mistake but denied intentional wrongdoing. The jury awarded USD 200 million in punitive damages and USD 43 million in compensatory damages from Tesla. The company plans to appeal, citing a pre-trial agreement that it says caps damages at USD 172 million.

Legal experts say the verdict could open the floodgates for similar lawsuits, as it marks one of the first times Tesla has been held responsible despite driver error. Analysts warn the ruling could damage Tesla's reputation just as Elon Musk plans to roll out driverless taxi services.

"This is a major wake-up call," said analyst Dan Ives. "Not a good day for Tesla." *—PTI*



MATCHA MADNESS

The tea trend Japan can't keep up with

Matcha, a Japanese tea that the world was unaware of, has become today's talk of the town. From anime and manga to social media and café menus, this vibrant green powder has become a full-blown lifestyle trend. But with skyrocketing global demand, Japan — the original home of matcha — is now struggling to keep up. Here's everything you need to know about the rise (and shortage) of matcha.

WHAT IS MATCHA?

- It is a fine green tea powder made from plant **Camellia Sinensis.**
- Traditionally whisked with hot water using a **bamboo chasen.**
- Often criticised for a grassy, bitter flavour.

THE MATCHA BOOM

- **40%** rise in export between 2020 and 2024.
- 55% increase in value **(2020: $109M; 2024: $245 million).**
- Will reach **$5 billion** by 2028.

WHY THE SHORTAGE?

Japan in unable to keep up with the demands of the global matcha market because:

1. TIME CONSUMING

- It takes **5 years** to grow it and it was never meant for mass production.
- It requires shade-growing, hand-picking, resting, and slow grinding, which is time consuming.
- Grinding speed: **40g/hour.**

2. SHRINKING PRODUCTION BASE (2008–2023)

- Cultivation area: ↓ from **48,000 ha to 36,000 ha.**
- Farming households: ↓ from **46,000 to 20,000.**

3. Aging farmers, no successors

- Fewer young farmers taking over.
- Labour shortages during peak seasons.

4. Climate change impact

- 2023 was Japan's hottest year on record hitting the plant growth.
- Kyoto (25% of leaves production) hit hardest.
- 2024 spring harvest suffered severely.

PHOTO: PTI

M'rashtra CM hands over ₹ 3 crore prize money to Divya

NAGPUR, 2 AUG

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday felicitated newly-crowned FIDE Women's Chess World Cup champion Divya Deshmukh here and handed over a cash award of Rs 3 crore to her. Deshmukh, 19, became the youngest to win the Women's World Cup title held at Batumi in Georgia on July 28 after she outwitted compatriot Koneru Humpy in the tie-breaker of the final. The victory not just earned her the prestigious title but also made her a Grandmaster. Deshmukh is a native of Nagpur, the same place from where CM Fadnavis also hails.During the programme held in the city, the Grandmaster thanked CM Fadnavis and the people of Nagpur for felicitating her. She said one gets to enjoy such moments rarely in life.—*PTI*

Pavlovic fractures eye socket ahead of the new season

MUNICH, 2 AUG

Bayern Munich midfielder Aleksandar Pavlovic's bad luck with injuries and illness seems to have struck again. The German champion said Saturday that Pavlovic has undergone surgery after fracturing his eye socket in a team training session on Friday. Bayern didn't say exactly how the injury happened or how long Pavlovic would be out, just that he "is facing a spell on the sidelines." The 21-year-old Pavlovic is considered one of world soccer's best young defensive midfielders but has already racked up a list of absences for sometimes-unusual injuries and illness.—*PTI*

Dagar cuts AIG Women's Open, lies 28th

PORTHCAWL, 2 AUG

Indian golfer Diksha Dagar handled the changing temperature conditions well enough to shoot 1-over 73, ensuring her place in the weekend rounds of the AIG Women's Open. Dagar, who carded 1-under in the first round, is now even par for two rounds and Tied-28th going into the final two rounds. Making her sixth Open appearance, Dagar is cutting for a second time with a Tied-21st finish in 2023, which is her best. Japan's Miyu Yamashita produced a bogey-free second round to reach 11-under-par through 36 holes to take a commanding three-shot lead. The 23-year-old Yamashita fired a bogey-free seven-under-par for the best round of the day. Then came bogeys on the 14th and the 16th, and she did well to ensure there was no more damage.—*PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Nagal loses to junior French Open champion

HAGEN, 2 AUG

India's top singles player Sumit Nagal lost to junior French Open champion and unranked Niels McDonald in the pre-quarterfinals of the Platzmann Open, an ATP 75 Challenge event in Hagen, Germany. Ranked 307, Nagal lost 2-6, 6-4, 4-6 to his 10-year-younger rival in the second round match, which lasted two hours and 16 minutes and was completed over two days due to rain. The two players had split the first two sets when the match was suspended and had to be completed on the second day. The 17-year-old McDonald, playing as a wild card, saved six of the nine breakpoints and broke Nagal five times in the match.—*PTI*

5th Test: Jaiswal's 100 puts India on top

Akash Deep scores maiden Test fifty, frustrates England

LONDON, 2 AUG

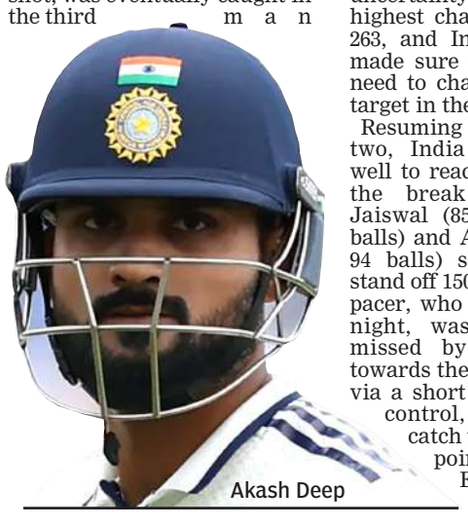
Yashasvi Jaiswal rode his luck to make his sixth hundred in challenging conditions as India extended their lead to 281 runs at tea on day three of the fifth and final Test here on Saturday.

India lost three wickets in the session but, more importantly, reached 304 for six at the break. England continued to drop catches, taking their innings tally to six. Jaiswal (118 off 164), who was dropped twice on Friday, was given another life on day three. Fair to say, he made the most of the lifelines offered to him for his second hundred of the series.

Shubman Gill (11 off 9) struck two sublime boundaries before falling to the incoming ball once again, with Gus Atkinson removing the Indian captain off the first ball in the post-lunch session.

With that, Gill ended the series with a staggering 754 runs, just 20 shy of Sunil Gavaskar's record by an Indian. Jaiswal, who got rich rewards for playing the cut shot, was eventually caught in the third man region. Karun Nair was caught behind off Atkinson, and as has been his problem, extra bounce in the corridor of uncertainty did him in. The highest chase at The Oval is 263, and India have already made sure that England will need to chase down a record target in the fourth innings.

India's batter Yashasvi Jaiswal acknowledges fans as he walks off the field after his dismissal(118), during the third day of the fifth Test match between India and England, at The Oval cricket ground, in London *PHOTO: PTI*



Akash Deep

Resuming the day at 75 for two, India did exceedingly well to reach 189 for three at the break with Yashasvi Jaiswal (85 not out off 106 balls) and Akash Deep (66 off 94 balls) sharing a 107-run stand off 150 balls. The Indian pacer, who was on four overnight, was eventually dismissed by Jamie Overton towards the end of the session via a short ball he could not control, giving an easy catch to Gus Atkinson at point. A bowler short, England failed to control the run flow against Akash Deep, who slashed his bat plenty of times in the session and got away with it. A fourth catch of the innings was dropped when Zak Crawley dropped a regulation catch of Akash Deep at third slip off Josh Tongue. England have so far dropped 19 catches across 10 Indian innings. A couple of days before the final Test, Akash Deep posted a picture of himself on social media, with a cheeky caption: 'Every ball counts even in practice'. And at The Oval on Saturday, he walked the walk, making every ball count, albeit with the bat. Coming in as a nightwatchman, Akash made the most of a reprieve and went on to score a gritty fifty, becoming the first Indian nightwatchman to register a 50-plus score since Amit Mishra, who back in 2011, had scored 84 against England at the same ground. —*PTI*

Josh Tongue *PHOTO: PTI*

WORLD SWIMMING CHAMPIONSHIPS

USA swimming star Gretchen Walsh

Americans set a world record in Singapore

SINGAPORE, 2 AUG

The United States set the world record in the 4x100 mixed relay on Saturday, clocking 3 minutes, 18.48 seconds in the swim world championships.

The old record was 3:18.83, set in 2023 by Australia.

Gretchen Walsh won the 50-meter butterfly Saturday at the swimming world championships, kicking off a day of American medal potential with her second gold of the event.

Walsh finished in 24.83 seconds in the one-pool-length sprint, beating Australia's Alexandria Perkins (25.31) and Belgium's Roos Vanotterdijk (25.43) to start one of the most anticipated days of the swimming program at these World Aquatics Championships in Singapore. Walsh — the 22-year-old short-course pool (25-yard) star who is proving quite adept at long-course pools too — also won the 100-meter butterfly event earlier this week. She was among the many Americans who struggled with a stomach illness contracted during the team's recent training camp in Thailand, having to pull out of the 100-meter freestyle event earlier this week.

"It just felt like myself again in the water," Walsh said on Peacock after the race, "and I think I was happy that I got that feeling back." The 50-meter butterfly is among the events that will make their Olympic debut in Los Angeles, and that's good news for Walsh. She has the eight fastest times in the event this year.

Ledecky wins again

Katie Ledecky won the 800 freestyle, and Gretchen Walsh took the 50-meter butterfly. The Americans now have eight gold medals. The championships close on Sunday.

Despite the relay gold, the story was Ledecky remaining unbeaten in the 800 freestyle. She first won that race in the 2012 Olympics and has never lost since in a major competition. After 700 meters, 18-year-old Summer McIntosh of Canada was slightly ahead, but she faded, and Ledecky won in 8:05.62, with Lani Pallister of Australia taking silver (8:05.98), with bronze for McIntosh (8:07.29). —*PTI*

Ajay Singh resigns as Interim panel chief

NEW DELHI, 2 AUG

Indian boxing's Interim Committee chairman Ajay Singh has stepped down from his post on Saturday to contest this month's federation elections, where World Boxing President Boris van der Vorst will serve as an observer.Singh resigned from his post with immediate effect, a day after the Interim Committee formally announced the election date of 21 August."I am pleased to inform you that the elections of the Boxing Federation of India have now been formally announced and are scheduled to be held on 21st August 2025," Singh wrote in a letter dated August 1 and addressed to van der Vorst, a copy of which has PTI."Since I intend to contest the forthcoming elections. —*PTI*

MESSI'S INDIA TOUR

Opening leg in Kolkata; Delhi, Mumbai

KOLKATA, 2 AUG

If all the pieces fall in place, football devotees in Kolkata will have the first sighting of iconic Lionel Messi after a decade, and the City of Joy will be the first stop in the Argentine's whirlwind journey across Ahmedabad, Mumbai and New Delhi, culminating in a meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The sources privy to the development informed PTI that all arrangements have been finalised, including booking the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai, but an official confirmation from Messi is still awaited."It's been finalised and we are waiting for an official announcement from Messi, maybe on his social media handle anytime soon," said the source."As of now, we have agreed on the proposed itinerary, and we are just awaiting an official announcement from his social media, which would be anytime soon," the source added. As per the itinerary, Messi will land in Kolkata on the night of December 12 around 10 pm and will stay for two days and one night the longest stop on his tour. —*PTI*

Lionel Messi

SHEDULE
December 13 (Kolkata): 9 am Meet and greet event; Statue unveiling (70-feet) at Lake Town Sribhumi, VIP Road; 12 noon to 1.30 pm GOAT Concert at Eden Gardens followed by GOAT Cup; December 13 (Evening): Adani Foundation private event at Shantigram, Ahmedabad.December 14 (Mumbai): Meet and greet at CCI (3.45 pm); GOAT Concert at Wankhede Stadium (5.30 pm). December 15 (New Delhi): Meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi; GOAT Concert at Feroz Shah Kotla (2.15 pm).

Raducanu knocked out of Canadian Open

TORONTO, 2 AUG

Emma Raducanu has been knocked out of the National Bank Open in Montreal by American fifth seed Amanda Anisimova. Raducanu lost in straight sets, with Anisimova securing a dominant 6-2, 6-1 victory. The British number one struggled significantly with her serve, managing to hold it only once in each set. Despite having won their two previous encounters, Raducanu failed to secure another break point after the initial stages of the match. Anisimova's win sees her advance to the last 16, where she will play either Elina Svitolina or Anna Kalinskaya.

Emma Raducanu — Taylor Fritz

Fritz getting more comfortable as American challenge continues

Taylor Fritz acknowledged the importance of nullifying Gabriel Diallo's big serves and the home crowd to reach the last 16 of the Canadian Open. Exactly 30 days on from their five-set thriller in the second round at Wimbledon, Fritz avoided such theatrics in Toronto as he earned a 6-4, 6-2 win over Diallo. In their previous match at the All England Club, Diallo fired 26 aces, but Fritz was able to prevail 3-6 6-3 7-6 (7-0) 4-6 6-3 in a gruelling three-hour and 23-minute battle. The 27-year-old Californian broke the 6'8" Diallo's serve to love in the opening game of the match and, in the second set, earned his first of two breaks at 1-1 despite trailing 0-40 in that game. "I thought it was really important not to let him get back in. [If] he gets a break back, he gets fired up with the crowd, momentum kind of shifts. —*PTI*

Debutants 1 Ladakh FC hold Tribhuvan Army to a 1-1 draw

JAMSHEDPUR, 2 AUG

Debutants Ladakh FC made a dream start to their Durand Cup campaign, holding Tribhuvan Army FC to a hard-fought 1–1 draw in a Group C match of the Durand Cup here on Saturday.

Defender Siju headed in the opener in the 23rd minute to script history as the first-ever Ladakhi player to score in the iconic tournament, before Tribhuvan Army's Nirajan Dhami equalised with a calm finish just before the break.

Tribhuvan Army from Nepal, dominant in possession during the opening exchanges, struggled to create clear-cut chances until the final 20 minutes.

But in the 23rd minute, defender Siju powered a precise header from a corner to give the youthful side a shock advantage. However, Tribhuvan Army grew into the game and, in the 40th minute, Nirajan Dhami delivered a composed finish, tapping in a through ball following a swift counterattack to level the score and execute a trademark 'Siu' celebration. —*PTI*

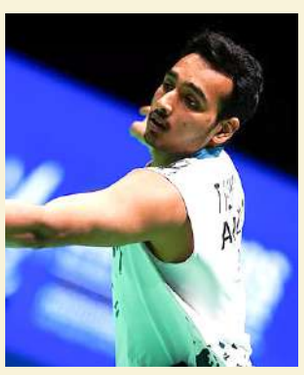
MACAU OPEN

Lakshya, Mannepalli bow out in semifinals

MACAU, 2 AUG

India's campaign at the Macau Open Super 300 badminton tournament came to an end on Saturday after Lakshya Sen and Tharun Mannepalli suffered semifinal defeats in their respective men's singles matches.

Lakshya, a 2021 world championship bronze medallist and reigning Commonwealth Games champion, couldn't match the pace and precision of Indonesia's Alwi Farhan, going down 16-21, 9-21 in a 39-minute contest to continue his patchy run that has seen him struggle with form and fitness this season.



The 23-year-old Mannepalli, ranked 47th in the world, squandered a strong start to lose 21-19, 16-21, 16-21 in a match marked by fluctuating momentum and a flurry of unforced errors.

It has been a tough season for world number 17 Lakshya, who has had seven first-round exits and two second-round ousters this season. The 23-year-old, who has been affected by shoulder, back, and ankle issues this season, had entered the tournament to gain some confidence before heading to the World Championships in Paris.

However, it was Farhan, the 2023 World Junior Champion and a member of Indonesia's bronze-medal-winning Sudirman Cup squad, who produced a dominating performance to knock him out of the tournament.

World number 25 Farhan recovered from a 0-3 start to lead 11-7 at the first break in the opening game. —*PTI*

Son Heung-min to leave English Premier League club

SEOUL, 2 AUG

After 10 years with Tottenham Hotspur, captain Son Heung-min announced on Saturday that he plans to leave the English Premier League club.

At a media conference in Seoul, Son said his decision to leave the Spurs was 'the most difficult" of his career and said the club was supporting him as he looks to move on to another team. Spurs will face Newcastle United in a preseason friendly on Sunday in Seoul in what could be the final match of Son's time at Spurs. "Before we start the press conference, I just want to share the information that I have decided to leave this club this summer," Son said. "Respectfully, this club is helping me with my decisions. So I just wanted to share this information before we start the conference."

"I came to North London as a kid, 23 years old, very young age, a young boy came to London who didn't even speak English, and leaving this club as a grown man is a very, very proud moment." —*PTI*